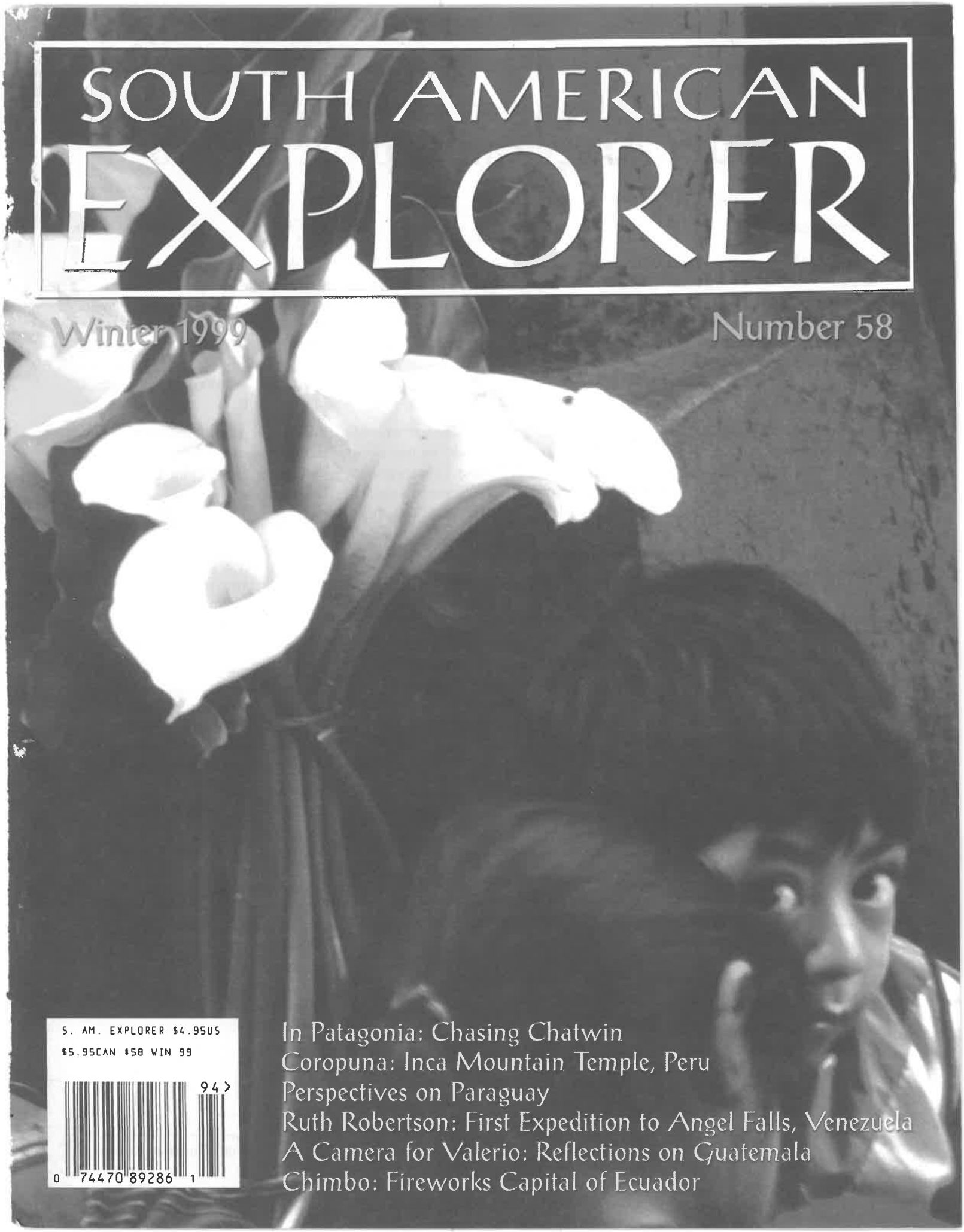
SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORER

Winter 1999 Number 58



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In Patagonia: Chasing Chatwin
Coropuna: Inca Mountain Temple, Peru
Perspectives on Paraguay
Ruth Robertson: First Expedition to Angel Falls, Venezuela
A Camera for Valerio: Reflections on Guatemala
Chimbo: Fireworks Capital of Ecuador

Explore South America with the

South American Explorers Club

The South American Explorers Club

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With Clubhouses in Cusco and Lima, Peru and Quito, Ecuador, and U.S. headquarters in Ithaca, New York, the SAEC collects and makes available to its members up-to-date, reliable information about Central and South America.

Membership is US $40 ($70 couple) per year. Residents outside the U.S. add US $10 (US $7 for Canada) for postage. Those wishing to sign up in the United Kingdom can join through Bradt Publications (Please allow 4-6 weeks to receive membership cards), 41 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 OLA, U.K.

Aims and Purposes:
The South American Explorers Club was founded in 1977 to:

- Further the exchange of information among travelers, outdoors people and researchers
- Support scientific field exploration and research in the social and natural sciences
- Promote field sports such as mountaineering, white water running, hiking, caving, biking and others.
- Awaken greater interest in and appreciation for wilderness conservation and wildlife protection.
- Receive contributions for projects aimed at conserving natural resources and improving social conditions in Latin America.

South American Explorer:
A 64-page quarterly magazine with articles on adventure travel, scientific discovery, history, archaeology, mountaineering, native peoples, languages, anthropology, geology, and more.

Membership Services include:
Knowledgeable Staff: Our friendly staff and volunteers provide advice and practical information to members.

Networking: We assist members seeking travel companions for a trip/expedition, or seeking to contact experts in a particular field.

Trip Reports: Trip Reports provide specialized information on just about everything—climbing Aconcagua, volunteering, learning Spanish, lining up a local tour operator, white-water rafting, hiking the Darien Gap, visiting the Galapagos, etc.

Maps: The Club maintains a collection of topographical, geological and road maps for member use and purchase.

Lending Library: There is an extensive library of both English and Spanish books at Clubhouses in Quito and Lima.

Merchandise for sale: Books, maps, tapes, T-shirts and other items are on sale at Clubhouses or through the Club's catalog.

Trip planning: Members can call upon their Club for help and trip planning information.

Discounts: Members receive discounts from many local tour operators, hotels and language schools.

Additional Member Services at Quito, Lima, and Cusco Clubhouses:
Equipment Storage, Mail, Phone and Fax Service, Book Exchange Library, Message Board, E-mail Service.

South American Explorers Club Catalog:
The Club's annual catalog contains books, maps, and language tapes. Please call or write the Ithaca office to request a copy of the latest catalog. Include $3.00 if catalog is to be mailed outside the U.S.

To join the Club: Contact us at our U.S. headquarters, use the order form on page 63, or sign up at one of the clubhouses.

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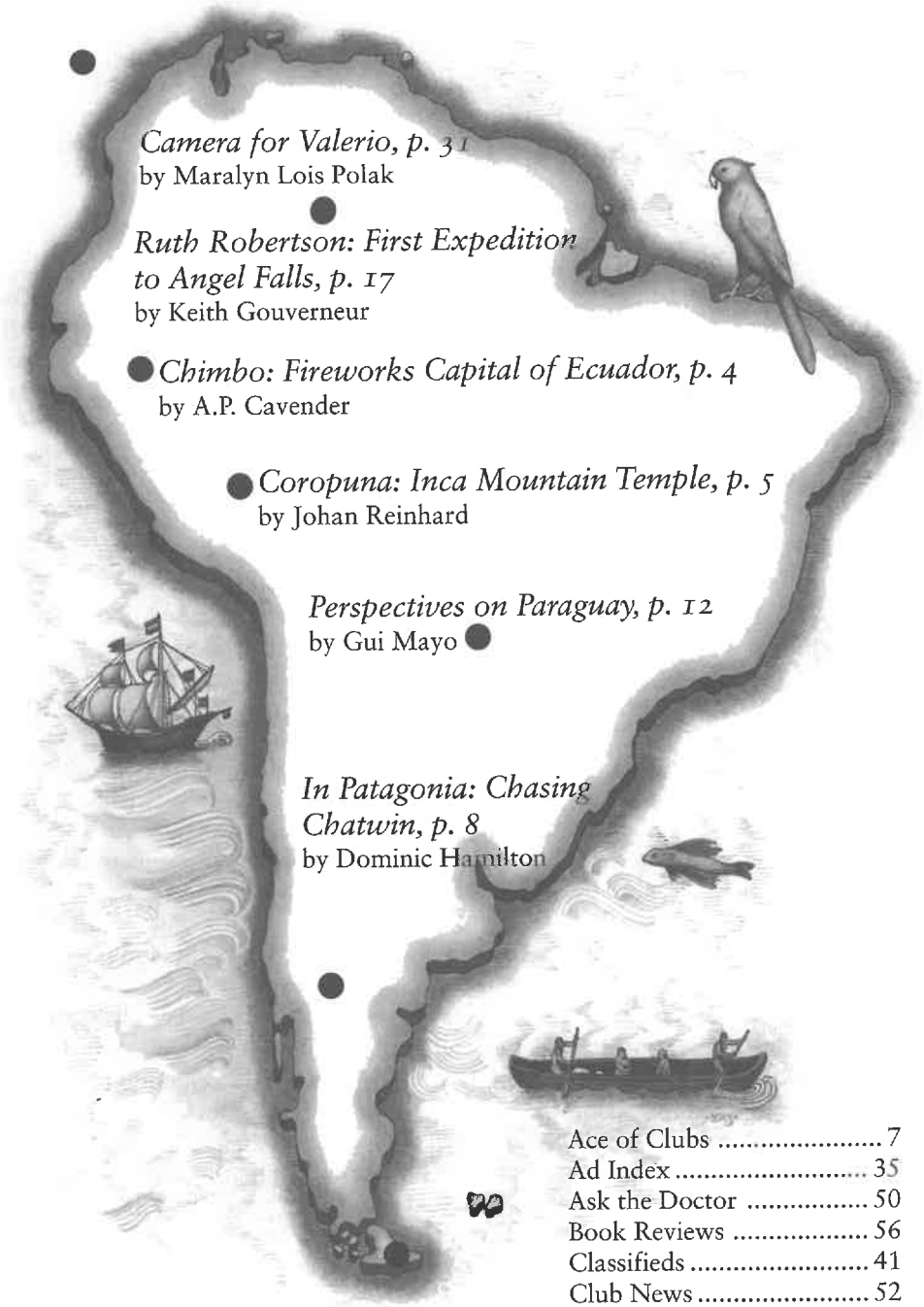

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Chimbo

Fireworks Capital of Ecuador

by A.P. Cavender

Photo by Ken Mijeski

If you have a passion for pyrotechnics, you won't want to miss Chimbo, 6 kilometers south of Guaranda in Bolivar Province.

Chimbo looks like any other small town in the highlands of Ecuador. It was once a major way station for Spanish settlers taking the precarious road up from Guayaquil to Quito. But later, the Pan American Highway bypassed the town, and today few tourists come this way.

Ecuadorians celebrate everything with fireworks (*fuegos artificiales*). What would Carnival be without the dazzling displays of fireworks? But for Ecuadorians, a national or religious celebration, wedding, birth, family or town fiesta, a grand opening of a new building or business, and even now and then a funeral is a proper occasion for fireworks.

Most of the fireworks that light up the night skies in Ecuador are made in Chimbo, not China, as you might expect. Suppliers of fireworks in Chimbo will tell you with pride that they regularly get orders from Guayaquil, Quito, Cuenca, and many other cities and towns throughout the country. One dealer boasted of clients in Peru and Colombia. Of course, Christmas, New Year, and Carnival are peak season for fireworks, but their wide use in virtually every celebration keeps manufacturers busy year-round.

In Chimbo, fireworks have a long history. Long ago, making fireworks started out as a cottage industry, but today, this small Andean town supports ten manufacturers, mostly small businesses that have been family-run for several generations. Chimbo is also renowned in the region for the guns and guitars its skilled craftsmen produce in workshops near their homes.

Luiz Alfredo Ruiz is a typical fireworks manufacturer and the owner of Pirotecnica. Now in his early thirties, Luiz started making fireworks when he was a boy and is the third generation of Ruizes in the fireworks trade. It's likely that Luis's children will carry on the business.

In a small shed, Luiz, his family members, and four hired workers assemble a variety of fireworks. The pictures of various saints hanging on the walls are for protection, and a bundle of *sábila* (aloe) is for good luck. Saints and aloe adorn homes and businesses everywhere in Ecuador, but amidst the volatile materials in Luiz's shed, they have particular significance. Luiz assures me that no one in his family has ever been injured making fireworks.

Luiz points out a grinding stone where he mixes potassium nitrate, sulfur, and charcoal to make gunpowder. Other chemicals are added to make combinations of six basic colors: red, blue, white, green, yellow, and lilac. For safety, all containers, as well as spoons, mallets and tappers—tools used in making fireworks—are wood or stone. Stacked neatly against the far wall are bamboo stalks cut to various lengths. These will be *bombas* (firecrackers) and *bombas cohetes* (rockets).

To make fuses (*mechas*), Luiz uses a wooden cross two feet high driven firmly into the ground. He ties a piece of string to the center post. Then, sitting on the ground, he pulls a foot of string taut and slides a raw potato up and down its length. Gunpowder clings to the moistened string, which Luiz then loops over the arms of the cross. Once it's dry, Luiz cuts the string into various lengths of fuse, as needed.

Luiz and the other producers of fireworks in Chimbo make more than your typical firecracker and rocket. There is a big demand for pinwheels in all sizes. Some craftsmen specialize in colorful fireworks of animals and people, displays that whistle, buzz, and throw off sparks in various colors. Some of the most popular fireworks are of bulls, deer, cars, and airplanes, but if you have the money, you can custom-order fireworks of just about anything. All fireworks manufacturers have photographs of their work. These are displayed on a wall or in an album to impress prospective clients with their creative versatility.

Though little known, the making of fireworks looms large in Ecuador. But beyond its importance to the local economy, fireworks have become a tradition here and imprinted on this small town a unique sense of identity.

As I walk through the narrow streets of Chimbo, the colorful models I see hanging from signs, walls, and doorways give the place a festive atmosphere. But however infectious the gaudy gaiety, it does not detract from the seriousness the craftsmen of fireworks bring to their trade nor the deep respect they hold for their livelihood.

Coropuna

Lost Mountain Temple of the Incas

Johan Reinhard

In 1989, the Peruvian archaeologist José Antonio Chavéz and I teamed up to look for the lost temple of Coropuna. Coropuna (21,079'/6,425m) is the highest peak in southwestern Peru. Not surprisingly, it was one of the most sacred mountains of the Inca empire. Cieza del León, the renowned chronicler of Inca customs, wrote in 1553 that there was once a temple on Coropuna. This temple was the Inca's fifth most important shrine. Alas, no descriptions of the temple survive, and even its location has been a mystery for centuries.

Background

According to Cieza de León, the revered temple of Coropuna received as many visitors as the four other Inca temples of Coricancha, Huanacauri, Vilcanota and Ancocagua. He describes the pilgrimages of Inca emperors and other important officials to Coropuna, where they sacrificed livestock, birds, and humans, and offered up gold, silver, and other riches. Guaman Poma noted

Johan Reinhard, Ph.D., is currently an Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society. He has conducted anthropological research in the Andes since 1980.

Continued on p.26.

To the Editor,

Just a note to tell you that I think the Spring 1999 (Issue 55) edition of the *South American Explorer* is one of the best ever. The articles on Sangay, Dirt Eaters of South America, Peruvian Desert, and Easter Island are not only informative but hilarious.

I can't say the same about "Patagonia or Bust." The ice caps (north and south) have been visited a number of times and intensively studied over a period of almost 50 years (see Tilman, Shipton, and the map room of the Royal Geographical Society in London). If I recall correctly, Eric Shipton was first on the ice in 1957. As a matter of fact, I had been "pooping" around the Fitz Roy group in a non-stop frigid monsoon for a month and ran into Eric—to our mutual dismay! That was some forty years ago...and I finally thawed out last week.

The expedition you report is obviously mainly geared to climb mountains and is using some rather esoteric "scientific" lingo to hopefully attract sponsors to cover their finances and gear. I've done the same thing in my wild and wooly past! And they evidently "got" you—Bully! I wish them well in Patagonia.

Warmest,

Robert O. Lee

To the Editor,

Please find enclosed a donation to the establishment of the Cusco Clubhouse. It's not much, but being a poor teacher from Kentucky, as a percentage of my income, it's a lot.

I recall bringing a handcarry to Lima for you many years ago. I was terrified, since I toted $1000 in cash plus pounds and pounds of cheese for the Lima Club! I survived to have a wonderful experience, particularly in Cusco. Cusco is my favorite city in the world. In fact, my dog's name is Cusco! This delighted the Cusceños. One family who invited me to lunch had a dog named Gringo.

I hope it all goes well and that I can somehow make it to Cusco again soon.

Kenny Karem

P.S. If you wish to use part of this donation for Cricket the Cuy's tombstone, go ahead. I myself "cuyed" in an Andean Indian village.

To the Editor,

I was disappointed to read your footnote on the Cuy: "Spanish for guinea pig; a small, fat domestic mammal (genus Cavia) of the rat family with short ears and no external tail." ("Ace of Clubs, Issue 57)

Serious scientific research has been published on the cuy. Indeed, the animal is not related to rats. See Nature Magazine, June 1991: 149-52.

E. Morales

To the Editor,

Dr. Joseph Breault's discussion on the diagnosis and progression of the often deadly Chagas Disease was most informative ("Ask the Doctor," Issue 57, Autumn 1999).

"Kissing bug" is a correct alternative term for the bloodsucking conenose or Assassin Bugs of the genus *Triatoma* (Family *Reduviidae*)–the vectors of Chagas Disease. However, the vague term "bed bug" used in Breault's column is an English name more correctly associated with, and long applied to, the small, flat, secretive "true" bed bugs of the genus *Cimex* (Family *Cimicidae*). These bed bugs were well known to older generations of Americans, infesting mattresses, old couches, and the like. The last I ever saw was about 1960.

The triatomine conenose bugs, by contrast, are quite large (3/4"), predacious-looking and conspicuous insects which the South American traveler would do well to learn to identify. Convenient illustrations and photos may be found in the little Golden Guide *Insect Pests* or in the *Audubon Field Guide to Insects and Spiders*.

Sincerely,

Guy Tudor

To the Editor,

If SAEC members are serious about living and teaching in Central America, simply being a native speaker of English will probably get you a job. If you are a qualified and experienced teacher of English (e.g. BA in Education or English, MA in TESL/TEFL, previous overseas experience)

Continued on page 47.

ACE of Clubs

Obituaries

South American Explorers Club

THE SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORERS CLUB, 22, died on September 30, 1999, done in by a pernicious New York germ.*

Founded in 1977 by Linda Rosa and Don Montague, the South American Explorers Club (SAEC) struggled through the early years in Lima before moving to Denver, Colorado. There, advised by well-wishers to find honest jobs as the club would never amount to much, the club's staff continued to stiff creditors and ignore correspondence until the tide turned. A respectable organization by 1992, the Club on this date resolved to make an effort to publish its quarterly magazine more or less on time.

In its brief existence, the South American Explorers Club (SAEC) established something of a world record in the number of times its pleas for financial support were answered by an incredibly forthcoming and understanding membership. It took genuine pride in dispensing generally accurate or at least plausible answers to the many queries it received over the years and in its relentless pursuit of truth offended a few but made an encouraging number of good friends and stalwart supporters. The SAEC will be missed by its staff and its many members and subscribers worldwide.

The SAEC is survived by robust offspring in Lima (Peru), Quito (Ecuador), and Cusco (Peru). Inquiries and expressions of grief should be sent to South American Explorers, who will do what it can to fill the boots of the SAEC and carry on its high goals and purposes with vim and vigor.

Memorial services for the SAEC will be as public as we can make them and are expected to last a number of years.

Your support during this period of mourning is greatly appreciated. In lieu of flowers, donations should be made to an appropriate non-profit organization, such as the South American Explorers.

**The lawsuit filed by The Explorers Club of New York against the South American Explorers Club ended with the signing of a Mutual Release and Settlement Agreement which we entered into to avoid the costs and uncertainty of further litigation and for no other reason.*

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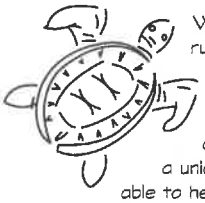

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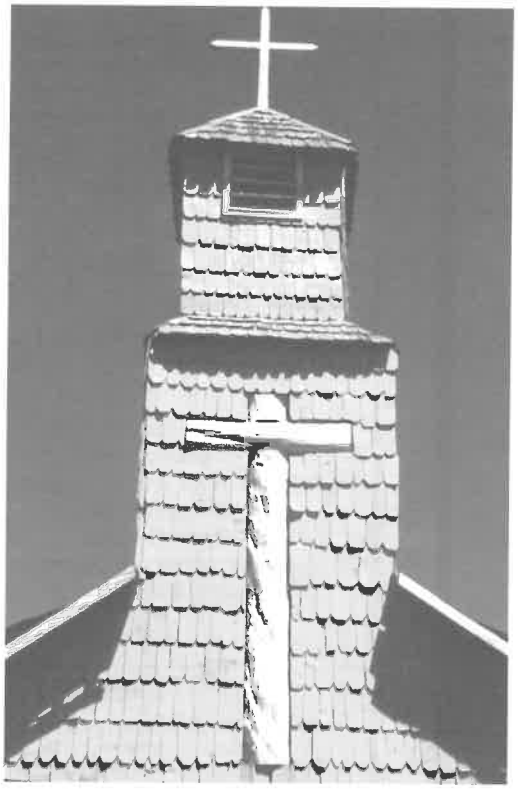

Chasing Chatwin

Dominic Hamilton

The elusive, gifted and erudite writer Bruce Chatwin claimed to have sent a telegram to the Sunday Times proclaiming, curtly: "Gone to Patagonia for six months." Two years later, in 1979, he published *In Patagonia*. It redefined travel writing.

Chatwin's obsession with Patagonia grew from a shrivelled piece of animal skin his uncle Charlie brought back from his seafaring travels. But another bee buzzed in his bonnet: Escaping the specter of nuclear war. At school at the height of the Cold War, Chatwin and his friends formed an Emigration Committee. They poured over maps and atlases, seeking the safest place to flee a nuclear holocaust. They finally settled on what the journalist Hesketh Pritchard called the "quaint tail of the South American continent."

Chatwin's obsession with Patagonia grew from a shrivelled piece of animal skin

Sitting by the side of the road with two Chilean police officers striding purposefully towards me, I didn't feel like I'd found the safest part of the globe. Far from it. The dusty track of road I was squatting on was the Carretera Austral Augusto Pinochet. The United Kingdom had just sequestrated said eponym pending extradition for crimes against humanity. Chile during the Pinochet Crisis wasn't the destination of choice for British nationals. Not forty miles to the east lies that other great friend of the British Isles: Argentina. Crossing the border was a bit like jumping out of the

Environmental and travel journalist Dominic Hamilton is currently researching Globe Pequot's Traveler's Venezuela Companion *guidebook for publication in 2000. Whilst careening up and down the country in his 1980 Toyota jeep, he writes for various magazines, newspapers, newswires and Internet sites, and concocts elaborate literary fantasies about becoming "the Bruce Chatwin of his generation". Contact him at: DominicHamilton@compuserve.com.*

frying pan into the fire. I only spent a day in the Argentine, in a town founded at the turn of the century by, of all people, immigrants from the Welsh valleys.

Trevelin, "the place of the mill," is a somnolent town just over the Chilean border where, free of the grasp of the Andes' snowy peaks, the pampas and horizons unfurl. It boasts a museum in the old mill with relics from the early days: engraved silver platters, Staffordshire dogs, dainty tea services, clog glass vitrines and beautifully-bound copies of the Bible in swirling Welsh script. On one wall, a scarlet Welsh dragon blazes on the blue and white Argentine flag, next to appliqué designs by little girls now long buried.

She was put off by the grey area of his sexuality.

Around the corner from the mill lies the house and pedicured garden of Clery Evans. In Chatwin's book she is a young girl, but the woman who greeted me was in her forties.

"Chapter 17," she said emphatically before I even had a chance to introduce myself. I was obviously not the first Chatwin groupie to come knocking. "I've had them all. From Japan, Finland, Australia—you name it."

Ms. Evans told me Bruce Chatwin stayed three weeks in their house. She had to look after him, she said, her pinched lips taut. I got the impression she didn't think much of him. Perhaps she was put off by the grey area of his sexuality. "He spent more time with the Arabs from the Bahai Institute," she confided. "I think he felt more...you know...at home there." Or it might have had something to do with Chapter 17. Here, Chatwin recounts her father shouting "Gimme another horse piss!" when he wanted another beer. The punch line of his favorite joke was "Put a lump of sugar in the sheep's mouth and suck its arse till it tastes sweet."

"Chatwin never went to Chile," Ms. Evans assured me. "He went north to find the plesiosaurus." I think she took pleasure in scuttling my theory. I wasn't having any of it.

restlessness, immobility, exile and artistic obsession

Chatwin's short story "The Estate of Maximilian Tod" appears in *The Anatomy of Restlessness*, an anthology of his writings published posthumously. It appeared in the *Saturday Night Reader* in 1979. It is an excellent piece of prose, both fascinating and macabre. It distills into four thousand-odd words the themes which course through Chatwin's work: restlessness, immobility, exile and artistic obsession. It also contains many autobiographical parallels.

As the story opens, the narrator's colleague and fellow glaciologist is posing pointed and suspicious questions about their research funds. She goes on to reveal that she's discovered a rare book written by a Scandinavian, Mustanoja, describing the glaciers of Patagonia. Upon hearing this, the narrator immediately runs to the library and turns "to pp. 141-2. The stroke of a razor, two neat folds and the sheet was in my pocket."

The narrator, we later learn, is one Maximilian Tod, an American-born collector and glaciologist. After the Second World War, he emigrates to South America where he discovers a wondrous "lost valley" blessed with a temperate climate, overlooked by the British border commission of 1902. Tod settles in the valley, building a perfect hideaway. Here, he surrounds himself with his books, art collection and furniture—his most cherished possessions.

Chatwin drops little crumbs along the way, clues for the perceptive reader to pocket. The pages Tod finds so alarming contain Mustanoja's description of the hidden valley. His colleague is suspicious because Tod has been siphoning funds to continue living there. The last line of the story leaves little doubt that Tod stopped at nothing to protect his life as a recluse: "One colour in particular continues to torment me: the orange of Estelle Neumann's anorak the second before I pushed her."

The narrator confides that after being wounded during the war he dropped the last letter of his name, making it Tod. "Tod" in German means death.

Futaleufú, thankfully abbreviated (though none too politely, I thought), to "Futa" by the locals.

Some time before reaching Trevelin, I sat in a hotel in Puerto Montt, capital of Chile's Lake District. The flickering, epileptic fits of a neon Pepsi sign punctuated my view of the city's bay. The *Footprint Handbook* to Chile, page 320 reads: "Lago Espolón, west of Futaleufú, reached by a turning 41km northeast of Villa Santa Lucía, is a beautiful lake in an area enjoying a warm microclimate: 30 degrees C in the day in the summer, 5 degrees C at night." Having spent the better part of the last two hours scouring other references and points on the map that made sense of Chatwin's story, I sat back, lit another cigarette and smiled smugly. X marks the spot.

As I entered the embrace of the lakeside hills, a hole in the mass of clouds cast a column of yellow light

right to the heart of the charcoal water. A sign, I told myself whimsically.

The lake curved round to the northwest, forests of dark southern beech hugged its shores. The tan brown of the snow-capped mountains turned purple in the evening light, and the sad, mournful cry of a *chuncho* echoed, the notes of its song falling step by step, as if down a staircase.

Lago Espolón lies twenty kilometers from the Argentine border. It's a decent walk from the nearest town, Futaleufú, thankfully abbreviated (though none too politely, I thought), to "Futa" by the locals. Anibal Vallejos and his family have lived by the lake for the last sixteen years. Not long enough to have known Chatwin, but long enough to realize they have a gem of a location. They run a campsite and cabañas, and organize tours of the cordillera by horse and fishing trips on the ten mile-long lake. Anibal's wife cooks on an old ceramic stove which huffs and puffs in the middle of the kitchen. She serves meals in a room where a plastic effigy of Lassie takes pride of place.

Anibal is a giant of a man with tufted, thick black hair, great big hands and a pea-round head crowded with strong features. His appearance is deceptive. He is in fact quite astute, his remarks and insights overturning my first impressions. I grew very fond of Anibal, though he couldn't help appending *gringuito* to everything he said to me.

His brother was a star of the *folklor* country and western music scene. He sang about unrequited love, mountains, and sheep. Sensitivity runs in the family.

Tod's valley and the house he builds are a haven from the modern world: "I...did everything to protect my retina from the visual affronts of the twentieth century," he laments at the end. The valley floor, for instance, isn't merely grass but "a carpet of the prostrate Andean strawberry, studded with fruit that gave off a delicious smell when crushed." His house is "an airy pavilion on a knoll about one hundred yards from the water...It owed its severity and perfect proportions to the utopian projects of Ledoux and the houses of Shaker communities in New York State." Tod's dream, we learn, is to recreate Rousseau's hermitage idyll at Ermenonville, fictionalized in his novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Faithfully enough, Rousseau's pastoral, idealized Eden was just as much a figment of his imagination as Chatwin's lost Patagonian valley. Or was it?

An important piece of evidence would be the "Belgrano glacier" mentioned in Tod's tale. Anibal told me a glacier was visible from the other end of the lake. I struck a deal with him and set off down the valley in his wooden boat with an outboard engine and some sandwiches. It was a filthy Patagonian day. Rain coupled with driving wind bored their way into my sou'wester, and I couldn't see the mountains, let alone a glacier.

Chatwin was Rimbaud's archetypal *l'homme aux semelles de vent.*

I moored the boat and walked the three miles to a hamlet further up the valley. On the way I met a *huaso*, a Chilean gaucho, mounted on a sturdy horse, rain streaming from his conical cowboy hat onto his yellowed sheepskin leggings. From there it bled onto his sheepdog, who didn't seem to mind. He offered me some *mate*, the herbal infusion which is to inhabitants of the Southern Cone what tea and biscuits are to country parsons, and we headed to his house. Around the final bend appeared a strange vision. It wasn't Tod's pavilion, or even the gleaming glacier, but a clapboard church perched on the hillside. It wasn't the shape or structure that struck me. It was the color. Orange.

The weather cleared. Screeching black and white plovers harangued me overhead, and clutches of violet and white lupines lining the lane blinked in the sunlight. I baled the water from the boat and putt-putted back down the lake. I could see right down the valley, pick out the white incisors of the mountain ranges. But no glacier.

Chatwin greatly admired nomadic peoples. He believed they held the "crank-handle of history."

There is another, larger glacier, on the road back to the Carretera Austral. Perhaps Chatwin saw that one. Perhaps not. I can't be sure he even came this way. I base my hypothesis on the fact that Chatwin was Rimbaud's archetypal *l'homme aux semelles de vent*. "My God is the God of Walkers," he proclaims in *In Patagonia*. He thought nothing of a twenty mile jaunt. Clery Evans' Trevelin is about that distance from Lago Espolón.

Chatwin greatly admired, and perhaps romanticized, nomadic peoples. He believed they held the "crankhandle of history." Their way of life, he argued, was more noble than the city-dweller's boxed existence.

He praised their ability to do without all but the most essential possessions. Yet Chatwin himself was an avid collector of art, a golden boy at Sotheby's before he took up writing. He struggled all his life, I believe, with the inner contradiction of his avowed love of the simple traveler's life—a journal, some books and a backpack—and his love of *objets*.

Continued on page 23.

I sometimes think the people who write guidebooks are insane.

Paraguay

I don't know why I go to countries like Paraguay.

Gui Mayo

I don't know why I go to countries like Paraguay. Nobody goes there. Paraguay boasts only a handful of tourist sights, and nobody I ask seems to know much about the place. But I like deserts and curious geographic features, and I'm strangely attracted to countries that have just acheived democracy. When I learned about the end of General Stroessner's dictatorship and read about the Chaco, the strange, great, empty land north of Asunción, I knew I had to go.

Paraguay was discovered in 1524 by Spanish explorers looking for an overland route to Peru from the east coast of South America. They found several Indian tribes there, including the peaceable Guarani. During the next hundred and fifty years, the Jesuits established rather enlightened missions in eastern Paraguay. They allowed the Indians to keep their language and even learned it themselves. Today, Paraguay is still a bilingual country. Travelers in the nineteenth century complained about how difficult it was to communicate with the locals. Everyone, even the upper classes, spoke Guarani or, worse, a mixture of Guarani and Spanish.

Asunción was established around 1537, and for fifty years it was the most important city in the region. Paraguay became independent around 1810, but landlocked and threatened by Brazil and Argentina, it adopted a policy of self-sufficiency under the first of its dictators, Dr. Gaspar Rodriguez Francia. Another dictator, Carlos Lopez, built the first railway, iron foundries, and the telegraph, but his megalomaniac son got in a dispute with Brazil, who joined with Uruguay and Argentina to take over Paraguay and divide the land among themselves. Paraguay won the war, the war of the Triple Alliance, but at a great cost—it's said that the war decimated the male population in the country. A few years later Bolivia and Paraguay got in a war over the Chaco, setting Paraguay back again.

Paraguay has had a history of one strongman dictator after another, ending with Gen-

Gui Mayo is an enthusiastic traveler presently living in "Berzerkly," California. If you would like Gui's unabridged account of her travels to Paraguay, contact the South American Explorers.

eral Alfredo Stroessner, president from 1954-1989. According to some, Stroessner's reign included opression, imprisonment and torture equal to that in Chile and Guatemala.

At Asunción, I ask the cab driver taking me from the airport to my hotel if democracy has changed anything. A little, he says, but people were used to the old ways; it would take time for them to adjust. "You have to realize it's still a baby democracy." I have a lot of questions, but not the Spanish to phrase them.

The first look at a new city is always a great experience. You tear off a piece and chew it up. My first bite of Asunción is quite a mouthful. I want to see Rio Paraguay, but there's a vast slum of hovels and garbage dumps between the town and the river, not the lovely parks I expected. The city is full of handsome buildings in decay, loose pavement tiles, and broken curbs. I read somewhere that Asunción was a swell modern city. Who wrote that? I sometimes think the people who write guidebooks are insane.

Hammers and sickles? In ex-fascist Paraguay?

I stroll by a building in Mussolini Modern with pillars and clusters of flags. On the face it proclaimed in huge letters "Partido Colorado." I stop dead: Wait a minute! I peek around the corner, like a character out of a Buster Keaton movie. Yes, it says "Red Party." Am I mistaken, or does each red flag waving in the wind have a little hammer and sickle on the corner?

Hammers and sickles? In ex-fascist Paraguay? I can't resist. I climb up the wide, grand steps and run into a tough-looking man with gravelly skin and greasy hair. I start to ask him what Partido Colorado means when he gestures with his chin to three pale, wrinkled, gruff old men sitting on chairs overlooking the steps, like vulures waiting for someone to die on the way up. I ask one what Partido Colorado meant. "Partido Colorado es un partido del gobierno!" He looks so cold, so hard, his blue eyes stony, that I think, That one's a fascist!

"Colorado," I say, timidly, "Um...como communista?" He nods, grimly, looking me right in the eye.

"Well, well," I say, meekly, "Muy bien!" and walk away in shock. Things must have changed a lot, if the communists have a party.

Later I ask the hotel desk clerk what "political party" was in Spanish. "Partido del gobierno," she says, and immediately gives the example of the Partido Colorado which is, she says, "The party of the right, the party of Stroessner." She goes on to explain that there are other political parties, like the Blues and the Liberals. The Reds are in at the moment. I ask her why people voted for them when they were so happy to have gotten rid of Stroessner himself. She says the Reds have influence...and money.

At six o'clock, I walk up to photograph the Partido Colorado building. A huge demonstration is broiling, with hundreds of Paraguayans standing on the stairs, shrieking in unison. I can't tell exactly what they're saying, but I finally figure out that the demonstration is for a candidate.

The people working in the shops across the street seem really tired of that Partido Colorado.

I arrange for a driver to take me to the Chaco, and we head north in a tiny blue car. The driver resembles W.C. Fields, but he's young, sweet, earnest, and anxious to do right by me. The language barrier lasts all day, as I stumble along in broken Spanish. Immediately, it becomes obvious that he has a cold. He blows fiercely into a napkin, again and again.

It's nonsense! I thought the Chaco would fit my image of a "real" desert, but it's green, green, green! Bushes, trees, pools, and red soil! At least, as far as Filadelfia.

The road extends ahead, mile after mile, a straight two-lane asphalt with bushes and small trees on either side. Nothing changes. On and on.

Finally the driver asks, "Musica?" I agree reluctantly. "Classical," he reassures me, then plays an awful medley of the most banal moments in a number of popular classics, all played to a relentless cymbal beat.

We come to Villa Hayes, a town that's really just a bit of disorder along the side of the road. The United States seemed to be much loved and respected in Paraguay. I couldn't imagine why, but part of the reason had to do with U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes. After the War of the Triple Alliance, the dueling sides agreed to submit to arbitration. They presented their case to Hayes, who decided in Paraguay's favor. Why Hayes was chosen, and why Argentina submitted to his judgement, I never found out. Hayes was an unambitious politician who didn't run for a second presidential term and is almost unknown in the United States. But in Paraguay, he's a national hero. This town and the surrounding county are named after him.

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The landscape grows more interesting after Villa Hayes. I photograph a four-foot high white stork-like bird with a dark blue-black neck nosing around in some reeds by a pool. The driver tells me its Guarani name is Yandu Wazu. "Wazu" means "big."

The classical medley ends, and I offer a cassette of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, a harpsicord recording which I listen to on buses to drown out the blare of pop music. It's a harsh, unforgiving performance, and it begins with a heart-breaking section, austere and tragic. I'm embarrassed, but I immediately see that the driver loves it! "Esta musica es muy profundo!" he says, and listens, intent. Then he adds, "Es la musica que se siente," and pounds his heart. We proceed down miles and miles of uninterrupted asphalt, between Bach lamenting and my driver honking into his napkin at regular intervals.

The Mennonites are Anabaptists who originated in Switzerland and the Lowlands. They're pacifists and reject military service. The first group arrived in the Paraguayan Chaco in 1927, building their own autonomous state there, with their own schools (in German) and law enforcement. So far, they're still exempt from military service.

We reach Filadelfia, the capital of the Mennonite colony. The streets are unpaved, the dust is a deep red. There are wide dirt roads, usually two lanes with a strip of dead grass between. The buildings are made of a hodge-podge of materials—hollow tile, corrugated iron, old wood, plaster, cement. It's hot, dry, ugly, and utilitarian.

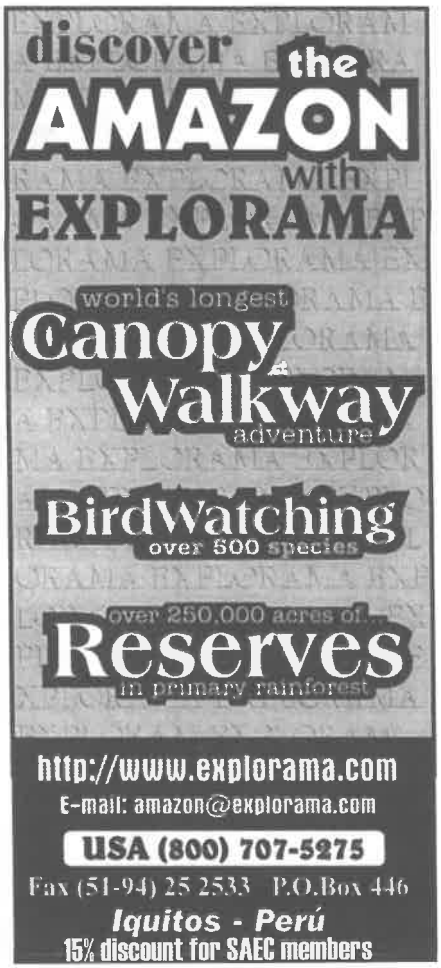
A big German fellow with a wide, kind face and a pointy nose, drives his pickup out of town. He is the only German I see on the streets. The outside work, in the heat and the dust, is done by Indians.

Ypacari, Piribebui, Ca'acue

Originally, the Indians resented the Mennonites who came onto their land. In time, relations improved and Indians started doing agricultural work for the Mennonites. But the Mennonites don't fraternize with the Indians, and even Indians who convert to the Anabaptist religion are encouraged to form separate congregations. My guidebook warns not to talk about the relations between Mennonites and Indians, that it's a sore subject. I could see why, although I wondered who you would talk to about it with, anyway.

We drive to a sort of botanical garden. A woman leaving the area just as we drive up explains that this is a center for the mentally ill. For the Mennonites who couldn't take life in Filadefia? Some wild pigs (peccary?) mill about in a nearby enclosure. A tidy, small pig trots this way and that, busy and worried. It ushers away its herd of females and piglets then comes back toward us, standing with his broad, hairy side to us, I suppose to show us how big he is. I wonder why this botanical garden and these animals are on the grounds of an insane asylum.

The next day, we return. I study the map. The names are fantastic. Ypacari, Piribebui, Ca'acue. Most names are accented on the last syllable. Curious, I ask the driver if newspapers publish in Guarani. He says, no, because it's very difficult to read.



They do a little skit, patomiming Indians with harps, making idiotic sounds. I am shocked.

In the park in Asunción Indians sell Paraguayan lace, baskets, and delicate jewelry made of tiny pieces of bamboo.

At an ethnic arts and music shop, I hear a twangy, bizarre song that I assume is an ethnic recording. I ask the

two plump young matrons, "Is it ethnographic?"

"No! It's harp music," one of them says, showing me a slick CD cover. "There are no harps where the Indians live!" They laugh and laugh, then forget all about me as they do a little skit, pantomiming Indians with harps, making idiotic sounds. I am shocked.

I walk a long way through the trees and finally see the Rio Paraguay with no hovels and slums in between. It's a long way away, there, smooth and blue and cool and remote, behind miles of green reeds.

I pass the railroad station and notice the newly installed wood panels in the old painted doors. A huge sign describes future renovations but says nothing about what is planned for the station once they fix it. I notice small repairs going on everywhere, a little here, a little there, paving, street repair, painting. It's like a bombed city coming back to life.

I leave Asunción in an oven of a car—no air conditioning, no fan, and the rear windows won't open. I'd like to come back to Paraguay, someday, at a cooler time of year. There's something about this place.

a bombed city coming back to life

Ruth Robertson

First Expedition to Angel Falls

Keith Gouverneur

November 1933, the American bush pilot Jimmie Angel, flying low over the jungles of Venezuela, looks down. Below, in the vast carpet of green, cascading over the rim of a towering rock plateau, he glimpses a waterfall of amazing height, taller than any he has ever seen or imagined. Glancing at his altimeter, he puts the elevation at 6,010 feet. "A waterfall," he marvels. "A waterfall a mile high."

Ruth was in love with the waterfall.

Once she got to Venezuela, it didn't take Ruth Robertson long to befriend the American bush pilots flying supplies to the traders and diamond miners in Guyana. In no time she became a fixture in the skies over El Dorado and had no problem convincing her pilot friends to change course and fly her over Angel Falls on their way to and from the interior. Ruth was in love with the waterfall.

Five feet tall, at forty-two, Ruth Robertson had already accomplished more than most women of her time. In 1942, at the height of World War II, she joined Acme Newspictures (later UPI) as a news editor. In 1944 she opened the UPI bureau in St. Louis and went on to start her own news bureau, the Press Syndicate. An ace sports photographer and writer, Ruth was the first woman allowed on the infield at Wrigley Field, and the first woman to photograph Notre Dame and Northwestern games from the fifty-yard line. Later in St. Louis, she was the first woman admitted into the Cardinal dugout where, in 1944, she covered the World Series.

Ruth's firsts went beyond sports. Covering the Democratic Party convention in 1944, Ruth scooped her fellow journalists with the announcement that an obscure congressman from Kansas would be the Vice Presidential candidate. In that same year, she snagged her first war assignment, covering the Aleutian theater. Tethered over open bomb bays, she photographed not just the war, but the epic battle against the elements to build the Al-Can highway.

It was not all work and no play. Ruth took time off from the war to team up with Clayton Knight, a pilot with Eddie Rickenbacker's "Hole-in-the-Ring," and explorer Vihjalmur Stefansson on a jaunt over the North Pole.

The Motilon Indians were known to attack drilling crews with their wood-tipped arrows

The end of the war found Ruth working for the New York Herald Tribune. But writing a column for the ladies section was not Ruth's idea of adventure. Covering society news could not compare with the action of the war years. Ruth yearned to be back wielding her Speed Graphic. No one was surprised when Ruth accepted an offer from Captain Lopez Conde, the ranking officer and coordinator of pilots for LAV, Venezuela's new airline. The salary was considerably more than what Ruth earned at the Trib. "Why not?" she thought.

Keith Gouverneur is a former soldier, adventurer and gemmologist. He now battles multiple sclerosis and lives in Los Angeles, California.

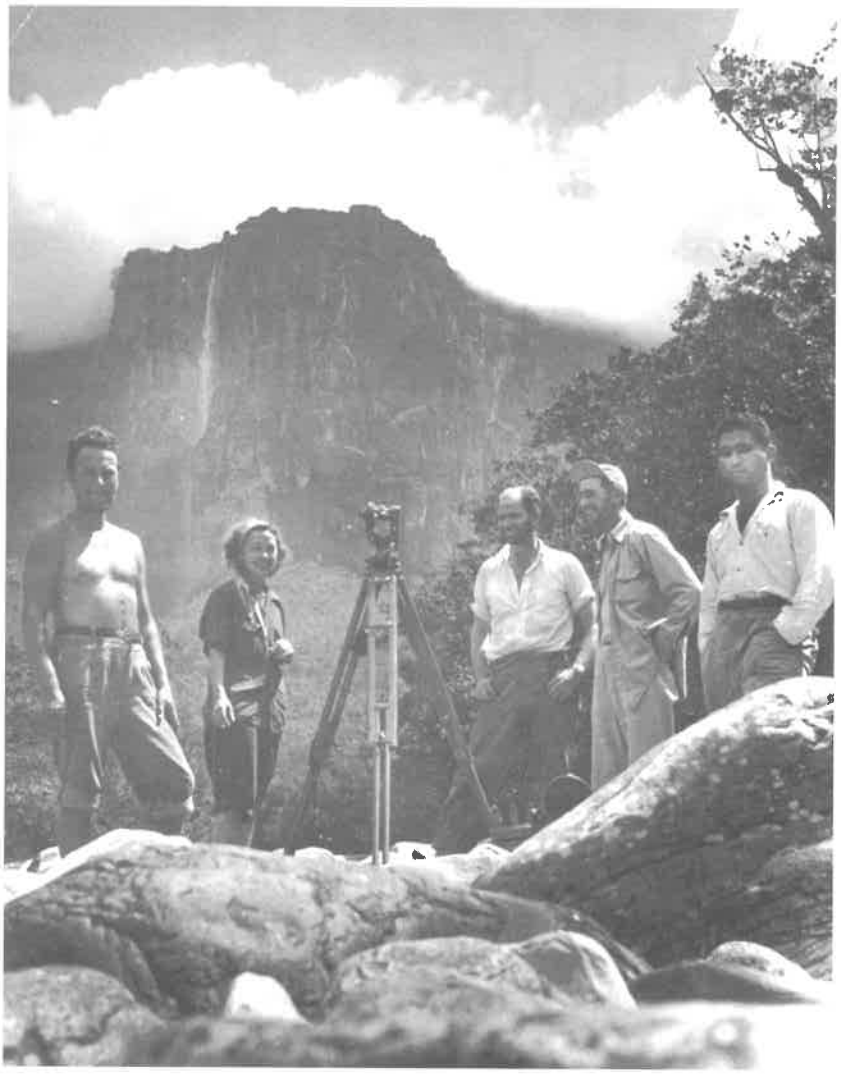
The job with LAV quickly unraveled, but Ruth stayed on, picking up freelance assignments and covering local politics. One job for an oil company took her to western Venezuela, into the territory of the Motilon Indians, who were known to attack drilling crews with their wood-tipped arrows. If Ruth had come looking for a land to photograph, a place where she could call her own shots and find the adventure she needed, she had come to the right country.

Among the potted palms of the American Club in Caracas, where Snowball the jovial bartender mixed drinks for the oil men, bush pilots and other expats, Ruth finally met the man who spoke about Angel Falls as "my falls." By then, she had already decided that whatever the cost, she would lead an expedition to photograph the falls from the ground and determine its true height.

"I already told you, it's more than a mile high!" Jimmie growled at Ruth during their meeting. "Only way you'll ever measure it is from a plane, and I already did that—it's 6,010 ft high...but the altimeter fluctuates a little...maybe three to six feet."

After 18 months in Venezuela, Ruth needed a break. The tropics had taken its toll. She felt rundown and missed her friends and family in Peoria. She also needed equipment and other things from back home. By this time she had a bulging portfolio of stunning photographs to show off and hoped to persuade the *National Geographic* to support an expedition to Angel Falls.

Amidst last-minute get-togethers and medical visits, Ruth found time to talk to an agent from Bell Helicopters. She thought the new technology might be useful for her expedition. Unfortunately, the distances far exceeded the craft's range.



Back in the States, her socializing over, Ruth hoisted her portfolio and headed for the *National Geographic.* It was not her first contact, and she arrived warmly recommended by William "Bill" Phelps, a prosperous businessman who had lived in Venezuela all of his life. One of the National Geographic Society's "good old boys," Phelps was an avid explorer and an expert on tropical ornithology. The National Geographic Society considered him the authority on Venezuela. Ruth had developed a close friendship with Bill and his wife, enjoying their hospitality. It was Phelps she went to for advice about reaching the falls by land. When Ruth sent her photos of the Motilon Indians to *National Geographic,* it was Bill Phelps they contacted to vouch for their authenticity.

Ruth was courteously received at the *National Geographic* headquarters. There was even talk of supporting an expedition to Motilon country, led by Ruth. Ironically, it seemed the *National Geographic* would willingly send a woman off to photograph one of the fiercest and most hostile tribes in all South America, but would not assist a Ruth expedition overland to Angel Falls. Ruth's response that she would launch an expedition anyway elicited amused smiles. Ruth later recounted, "One editor, apparently tossing it out as a joke, said that *if* I ever tried and *did* successfully complete the self-assignment, (they) would want first look at the article and photos."

There had been four previous attempts to reach Angel Falls by land. All failed for lack of supplies.

In the close-knit community of American pilots and adventurers, Ruth soon became a regular. Her passion for discovery and photography infected others and won sympathizers along the way. All rallied around the five-foot dynamo when she revealed her plans to get to the falls. They looked upon her quest as their own.

Art Jones had been the first pilot to fly Ruth over the falls. In late November in 1948, he showed up at Ruth's apartment in Caracas with Alejandro Laime in tow.

All of Ruth Robertson's pilot friends knew the Venezuelan jungle from the air, and Jimmie Angel had even landed on the summit of Auyán-Tepuy. But if Ruth hoped to reach the Falls by land, she'd need help from someone who could guide her through the territory of the Pemon Indians.

There had been four previous attempts to reach Angel Falls by land. All failed for lack of supplies. The Tepuys are very much like islands. Instead of water, however, these emerald islands are surrounded by swaths of grassland that offer only meager subsistence to the Pemon who live there.

By the first half of the 20th century, the Pemon had managed to avoid contact with evangelists and even the most determined gold hunters. Yet, for reasons unknown, Alex Laime had been accepted by the Pemon and had won their trust.

The meeting between Ruth and Alex Laime went well enough. He spoke sufficient English to discuss Ruth's concerns. Did Laime think an expedition could make it to the Falls? Laime was confident it could be done, given enough porters to carry needed food and other supplies. Was Laime familiar with the small flat area northeast of the Auyán-Tepuy where Jimmie Angel had landed? No, he wasn't. Had he ever been to the Churun Canyon? No, no one had. Still, he had been to where the Carrao River meets the Churun. Was there somewhere a plane might land to supply the expedition? Alex believed that Uruyen, a flat, grassy meadow, might be long and wide enough for a large aircraft to land. But even if Uruyen could handle

a supply plane, it was a long way to Churun Canyon, considerably further than Ruth had bargained for.

While going over what was needed for an expedition, Ruth had a stroke of good luck. To measure the falls scientifically, she'd need to bring along two qualified engineers. Finding even one engineer in Venezuela at that time was a problem, much less finding two and then convincing them to take part in a hazardous expedition. Alex Laime fortunately was an engineer with a degree from the University of Riga.

By April 1949, Ruth had put away a bit of money. She didn't have any immediate photo assignments from the oil company. It was time, she decided, to act. She notified Laime to begin preparations.

Hiring aircraft proved costlier than Ruth had anticipated, and lacking sponsors, she would have to cover the cost on her own. As Ruth was lining up supplies for the expedition, she received a call from John Hightower, an American businessman. Hightower was an habitué of the American Club where for weeks hardly anyone spoke of anything but Ruth's expedition.

Hightower called to tell Ruth he was prepared to pitch in for expedition expenses if Ruth would let him come along. Hightower planned to write about the expedition and even offered to buy any photographs Ruth took. Better yet, Hightower could come up with the second engineer Ruth needed to measure the falls. Finally, if Ruth let him bring along a friend, Jim O'Brian, he would cover a good share of the costs of air transport.

It was not an easy choice.

For Ruth, adding two men to the expedition posed major organizational problems. Still, at this stage, the money was enticing, and Ruth needed the money. Then, too, with Hightower's promise to buy her photographs, she might even turn a profit.

Costs for supplies, pilots, planes, Pemon porters, etc. were "astronomical."

However, no sooner had Ruth reluctantly agreed to take Hightower along then he switched the rules by demanding the departure date take place in ten days. The reason? He had some vacation days coming up.

To Ruth this was ludicrous. It was April. In March and April, there would be only a trickle of water over the falls, and low water would make it difficult to navigate up the Churun. Ruth was

about to put her foot down and make it clear who was in charge when she got another call, this one from Hamilton Holden. Holden, head of the Princeton University film unit, was visiting Venezuela when he heard of the Robertson expedition. Anxious to get in on the action, he offered Ruth $2000 to take his cameraman along. It was an offer Ruth couldn't refuse.

At a meeting at the American Club, Ruth totaled up her costs for supplies, pilots, planes, Pemon porters, etc. They were, she wrote, "astronomical." But in the end, she overcame her misgivings, specifically about Hightower, his sidekick O'Brian, and a departure date she thought was far too early. The expedition would set out on April 23, 1949.

They had bulldozed her into starting before she was ready—now they were gone.

The Pemon elders grumbled. They remembered old legends that warned against going too near Auyantepui. Those who did brought down the wrath of Mawariton. The elders cautioned Ruth and her party to take heed. They must never wash cooking utensils in the river but instead carry water a respectful distance away before cleaning up. To do otherwise would offend Rato, the water spirit.

Ruth feared for the expedition. Hightower had reneged on his promise to find the second engineer. Bad news. Ruth absolutely had to have two engineers to accomplish her goal. Then, too, food and other supplies were dwindling at an alarming rate. Worse, just five days into the expedition, Hightower and O'Brian announced they'd had enough. Their vacation over, they told Ruth she could come with them or stay, but they were leaving. With that they boarded the DC-3 and took off. Left on the banks of the Rio Aicha, Ruth fought back tears of frustration and disappointment. She felt betrayed by Hightower and O'Brian. To them, it had all been just a junket. They had bulldozed her into starting before she was ready—now they were gone. They took with them the one gun large enough to kill a tapir–the only game large enough to feed the expedition if their freeze-dried food ran out. Pemon blow darts would not do the job. If that weren't bad enough, Hightower had also pocketed the antivenin. This could mean death to anyone encountering the wrong kind of serpent.

On Saturday morning, April 30, a Pemon Indian arrived in camp with news. Laime was preparing a suitable landing strip, west of the route into Churun Canyon. By noon, the sound of a small plane filled the valley. It was Shorty Martin, a pilot friend of Ruth's, bringing in supplies and, almost as important, he had a passenger, Perry Lowry, the second engineer Ruth needed to do the job. Lowry, an American engineer working in Venezuela, was giving up his vacation to help.

At last, things appeared to be looking up. Ruth dispatched Oley Olsen to meet up with Laime at the new airstrip.. Once this was done, she could start ferrying the equipment.

Sunday morning, May 1. In her diary, Ruth wrote, "The blow...fell this morning....We awakened...to see Alejandro Laime walking toward us...He had arrived during the night. I had...such high hopes...Now here were Laime and his Indians—and the dugouts we would need—instead of up at the mountain. I felt...whipped. I couldn't see any way out of our predicament."

The snafu had come about because Laime had no way of communicating with the pilots, and the pilots, because of the dense vegetation, couldn't see the men on the ground. When no planes arrived and food ran out, Laime felt he had no choice but to return.

For Ruth, everything had radically changed. The dugouts she'd planned on having to move up the Churun Canyon were now in Uruyen. Flying them back with a light plane was impossible. She could either quit or do it the hard way—take the long route upriver by dugout.

And other obstacles loomed. Because the Indian porters refused to go any further, Laime had to recruit a whole new crew in the village of San Rafael de Acanan, but only after agreeing to pay triple wages. Costs soared.

The expedition now consisted of Alejandro Laime, ten Pemon Indians, Perry Lowry, the engineer brought in by Shorty Martin, cameraman Ernest Knee, Enrique Gomez the radioman, and Ruth Robertson, who hoped to lead them to the Falls.

North and then west of the Kamarata valley, the explorers followed the Acanan River downstream, shooting rapids when the Pemon navigators felt confident, unloading the dugouts and portaging when they didn't. The Acanan gave way to the Carrao, a swift, muscular black-water river skirting the edges of Auyán-Tepuy.

"The Indians came...this morning with their faces painted... a deep red."

Standing on the *curiara's* prow the Pemon pilot, carrying his talismans and reciting the Taren, scanned the cryptic water for signs of danger. The sleek and light Pemon *curiaras* were not built to carry photographic equipment, movie cameras, theodolite, radio gear, and generators, plus all the hammocks, cooking pots and food to feed the expedition. Fully loaded and low in the water, the dugouts plowed heavily upriver. At every departure, the Pemon insisted on packing and repacking everything. Often dissatisfied with the final result, they insisted upon repeating the process. Tensions mounted.

Thursday, May 5, Ruth wrote, "At 4:35 a TACA plane came sweeping down....[it] was either Charlie Baughan or Art Jones...I stood up in the dugout— a precarious undertaking since the water was about three inches from the top—and with hands aloft, shaking them in prize-fighter fashion...we waved like mad."

Four days later, they reached the wide mouth of the Churun ("thunder" in Pemon) and entered the gorge leading to Angel Falls:

"The Indians came...this morning with their faces painted...a deep red...Their paddles had mysterious-looking signs...They were grimly serious, and small wonder—they've never been in this canyon....Last night as a precaution Laime brought all the dugouts from the Indian camp to ours, for he had heard some of the Indian men say that they would rather go back than into that canyon! So the Indians have put on the red paste to make them invisible to the Kanaimas (spirits). They brought over from their camp a small pot of the stuff...So I painted several lines on my cheek and forehead."

Nervously reciting their Taren and pushing their *curiaras* against the swift, chilly current, the Pemon paddled furiously upriver, flanked by walls soaring up to 3000 feet, a place rarely, if ever, visited by humans. Finally, with further progress impossible, a decision was made to cut a *pica* (path) through the thick forest. The expedition would haul all equipment overland from that point on.

To call a *pica* a path is a gross overstatement. The Pemon hack away just enough vegetation for them to pass through the forest. But what suffices for a Pemon is a hazardous undertaking for most mortals. Those following the guides and porters ran up against sharp, knee-length stalks, slogging in the muddy jungle over fallen trunks and through matted vegetation. In the heat and humidity, clawing forward under heavy loads, tempers flared. Ernest Knee, the cameraman, refused to carrying his own equipment. He ordered the Pemon to put down the radio and carry his load instead. When this didn't work, he threatened to turn back and tried to persuade some Pemon to come with him. Ruth intervened, saying that Knee could do as he pleased, but that the porters were staying put. If the Knee face-off proved anything, it proved once and for all that this was Ruth's expedition.

They heard a thunderous roar.

With only a vague idea of which way to go, the expedition stumbled on, running into enormous boulders, backtracking, plodding forward again into the dense vegetation. Then, on day three of the exhausting trek, a shout went up from those in front. Coming around a bend in the canyon, they heard a thunderous roar. Ahead, a silver cascade dropped from atop Auyán-Tepuy. They had reached Angel Falls.

Ruth wrote, "I climbed up on the big rock, which must have been a twelve-foot square flat surface. I sat, panting and catching my breath, then looked at my watch. It was noon, May 12. We made it, I thought wearily...to Jimmie Angel's waterfall."

That evening the expeditionaries

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took turns cranking the portable generator, so that the official notice of arrival could be sent: "To Ministry of Communications. AP, UP, Caracas Journal. May 12. Expedition Salto Angel today reached the Falls. Weather perfect."

Friday the 13th of May was a busy day for all. They had to measure, film, and photograph the falls. There was a moment of excitement when Ruth discovered a Veinticuatro ant in one of her socks. Later that day, one of the group nearly stepped on a Monkey Spider, a large venomous tarantula. Three weeks in the jungle was beginning to take its toll. Ruth had a large rash, and just about everybody suffered from jungle mites and infected tick bites. Worse, the expedition was running low on sulfa drugs. Insect repellent was long gone, and food was rapidly dwindling.

That day, the skies opened up. Rain poured down, and the river rose. It was time to get out. Over the radio, Ruth heard that air transport waited on the Mayupa airstrip, where a week ago Laime had waited in vain for the advance party to arrive. The falls had been measured and photographed. With a little luck and a Pemon prayer, Ruth would soon be home.

Indeed the highest waterfall in the world.

Jimmie Angel was not at all happy with Ruth. As she told it, "I was face to face with a two-hundred pound, five-foot-three bundle of indignation and wrath. As mercurially as he had been mad, now he was sad and near tears."

Slumped against the terrace rail of the American Club, Jimmie groused, "I've been telling folks for years that my waterfall was a mile high. Now you gotta go and spoil the whole thing—I tell ya' it *is* a mile high!"

"Jimmie," soothed Ruth as she brought him a cool drink, "nobody would have been happier than I had it been a mile high. But from all that Perry says, he doesn't think that it will go higher than 3000 feet."

Perry called in a day later with the results. The falls plummeted 3,212 feet, with the main drop 2,648 feet. Not a mile high, but indeed the highest waterfall in the world.

The *National Geographic* ran the story "Jungle Journey to the World's Highest Waterfall" in its November 1949 issue. The *National Geographic* paid handsomely, but Ruth never forgot the editors' condescending manner when she first approached them about backing her expedition. There was no apology from the *National Geographic.*

There was no apology from Hightower, who was mistakenly listed among members of the expedition. Hightower even attempted to steal her glory by claiming to have reached the falls himself in a dispatch chock-full of fabrications and hyperbole and illustrated with file photos.

There was never any apology from all those who scoffed at the idea of a forty-year-old woman from Illinois leading an expedition to a little-known corner of the world to a place feared even by those who lived there.

But apologies were never what Ruth sought.

Ruth knew what the public wanted: "They wanted...wild animals, wild Indians, and fantastic adventures." But Ruth had the real story. She said it best herself. What she had to tell was a story of two Americans, a Latvian, a Canadian, a Venezuelan, and ten Kamarata Indians "who had gone on a long, weary trek to measure a waterfall we believed to be the highest in the world."

Chatwin, cont. from page 11.

accused of bending facts to quench his thirst for the bizarre and baroque

Interestingly, many of Chatwin's possessions reappear in "The Estate of Maximilian Tod," perhaps reinforcing the confessional tone of the story. In Tod's hallway hangs a crystal chandelier, which Chatwin mentions in an autobiographical essay. Chatwin cherished a sheet of Islamic calligraphy in his London flat; Tod hoards a sheet of Turkish calligraphy. Tod mentions some Japanese objects he acquired from his friend Ernst Grunwald; Chatwin owns a Japanese Ngoro red lacquer snuff box once owned by a German, Ernst Gross (of which he told a friend: "If you want to know what encapsulates what I am and everything I believe in, it's this"). It is revealing Tod should claim to have abolished "with bedouin rigour" the human form from his possessions. In an article he wrote for *House & Garden* about his London flat, Chatwin admits that at one point he "fell for a kind of 'Islamic' iconoclasm and believed, in all seriousness, that one should never bow before the graven image." But it's not just in the material effects that we find autobiographical traces.

Tod is a disturbing character. Describing his wartime experiences, he juxtaposes "the excellent wildfowl shooting of the Pripet Marshes" with "the oxyhydrogen flares of the flamethrowers." Even knowing they would lose, he fought on the German side because "war is Man's supreme aesthetic experience and...only the Germans and the Japanese understood this." He finds his soon-to-be-shoved-off-a-cliff-edge colleague, Estelle Neumann, "the perfect mixture of brilliance and incredible stupidity," possessing "the blind, unreflecting courage which lacked the imagination to turn around." He is a liar, a defrauder, and ultimately, a murderer.

I'm not accusing Chatwin of murder (to my knowledge he never murdered anyone or anything but his boots), but he has certainly been accused of fabrication, of bending facts to quench his thirst for the bizarre and baroque. Tod, like Chatwin, is also a literary and cultural show-off. The short story makes you feel worryingly ignorant, and sends you hurrying to a dictionary. Who is Ledoux, for instance, and just where are the Pripet Marshes?

"He was a mytho-maniac, in the best sense of the term."

Chatwin admitted honestly enough that he didn't know where the line between fact and fiction lay. He acknowledged once in an interview that he counted up the lies in *In Patagonia* and the result "wasn't too bad." His friend the journalist John Ryle knocked his character succinctly on the head: "He was a mythomaniac, in the best sense of the term."

The fictionalising of experience is an important theme in all of Chatwin's work, and, some critics argue, is evidence of Chatwin's inability to confront his true nature and sexuality. He was married yet notoriously, though not unashamedly, gay. He claimed to be suffering from a rare bone disease picked up in China, when in fact he was HIV positive. Intriguingly, Tod twice throws out hints of his homosexual nature. It's typical of Chatwin that intimations are dangled tantalizingly before the reader, but never spelled out. As the critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger remarked, "When we return to Chatwin we find much in him that has been left unsaid."

Cain and Abel, the poet Li Po, the travelogues of Rimbaud and Whitman, Sufi dancers, whirling dervishes

Stylistically, *In Patagonia* is remarkable for the near-total absence of an authorial voice. The novel forever did away with the traditional "hapless Englishman abroad among thoroughly amusing natives" tone employed by its predecessors. Chatwin steps out of the narrative, ushering the characters he meets, or literary and historical anecdotes, on to center stage. As one of his biographers, Nicholas Murray, put it, Chatwin "rarely wrote about the actual mechanics or hardships of travel. He was more interested in what he saw than in the circumstances of the man who saw it."

In "The Estate of Maximilian Tod," the narrator only discloses his identity towards the end. He even cauterizes his physical description to continue enumerating his possessions and their significance, as if they will describe him more effectively. Tod, like Chatwin, is elusive, his descriptions elliptical. You never quite feel you know where they are coming from, or taking you.

Tod is an exile, a wanderer. Chatwin spent most of his brief nomadic life attempting to come to grips with what he called "the question of questions": the nature of human restlessness. His most commercially-successful book, *The Songlines*, is arguably little more than the *descarga* of a lifetime's collection of anecdotes and references justifying his inability to stay put in one place for more than two minutes. The Australian aboriginals' culture, in theory the context of the book, is merely employed as the vehicle to drive home his point. His in-

tellectual reach and scope are breathtaking. He sweeps you along in a tangle of tangents. Cain and Abel, the poet Li Po, the travelogues of Rimbaud and Whitman, Sufi dancers, whirling dervishes and tramps he meets on the street...all are press-ganged into his service.

As if in reaction to his infatuation with nomads, Chatwin also sought to elucidate the four walls of immobility. His most beautiful fictional work, *On the Black Hill*, recounts the lives of two brothers in the Welsh valleys who rarely leave their family home. When they do, disaster or upheaval predictably strikes.

Maximilian Tod is a wayfarer born in the States, exiled from Europe and washed up on the shores of South America. He's a refugee, flotsam, and yet pinned, chained to his home by the jetsam he's beachcombed along the way. Like Utz, the obsessive art collector of Chatwin's last novel and Golum in *The Lord of the Rings*, he can't let go of his "preciousssss."

Tod's love for inanimate objects, and the lies he weaves in order to protect them, are his ultimate undoing. The Czechoslovak Utz dies miserably, refusing to flee the Iron Curtain for fear of losing his priceless collection of Meissen figurines. Only his lover, his best friend, and his vulture relations attend his funeral. *The Estate of Maximilian Tod* concludes with the glaciologist languishing in a shack in the Atacama Desert, his water running low, tormented by hallucinations. He has lost his Estate. He no longer *is*.

All his life, Chatwin cherished a 'Box of Treasures', a cardboard container filled with his most exquisite possessions. He kept it hidden under his bed, and would only take it out to replace an old object with something new. In his dying months, deluded and anything but wealthy, he went on a wild buying spree. He spent over a million pounds in little over a month. The objects were all, eventually, returned. "It was deeply disturbing and upsetting," said his friend Frances Wyndham. "He just wanted to get beautiful rare things."

"I had accomplished the object of this ridiculous journey."

At only one point does Chatwin quote from his notebook in *In Patagonia*. The reader is treated to a fleeting glimpse of the man behind the mask of narrative:

Walked all day and the next day. The road straight, grey, dusty, trafficless... beginning and ending in a grey mirage. You'd see a dust-devil behind and, though you knew now never to hope for a truck, you thought it was a truck. Or there'd be black specks coming closer, and you stopped, sat down and waited, but the specks walked off sideways and you realized they were sheep.

After two days solid on the side of General Pinochet's dream to conquer the south, I was suffering from similar aural hallucinations and maddening mirages. The bus I'd been told to expect hadn't materialized. No cars had gone south for the last twenty-four hours, only locals on parochial errands who looked at me full of pity through their car windows. My money was running low. Worse still, I was missing a party.

At that moment though, my journey felt no less ridiculous than Chatwin's.

I'd listened to all my tapes backwards. I'd forgotten to pack more books, and was forced to reread the ones I had over and over. One sentence in particular stung me. At the end of *In Patagonia*, Chatwin finds the cave where his Uncle Charley discovered the piece of prehistoric mylodon skin which spurred the author's journey. He scrabbles about amongst the rocks and stones until, on the verge of giving up, he finds a few strands of coarse reddish hair he recognizes. He remarks in his inimitable pithy prose: "I had accomplished the object of this ridiculous journey."

My notebooks were full of scribbles, my books scarred with underlining and exclamation marks, my head heavy with obscure facts about nomads. I'd found the valley, done my research, taken the photo, proved my point. At that moment though, my journey felt no less ridiculous than Chatwin's.

I consoled myself, as Chatwin did, and as, indeed, any down and out traveller should, with the words of Robert Burton, the Jacobean author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: "The heavens themselves run continually round, the sun riseth and sets, stars and planets keep their constant motions, the air is still tossed by the winds, the waters ebb and flow...to teach us that we should ever be in motion."

The bus came. I made the party.

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Coropuna, continued from p.5.

the sacrifices of twelve year old children and lists in detail the ceremonial offerings of goose and flamingo feathers, coca leaves, seashells (*mullo*, the rare Spondylus seashell), guinea pigs, raw meat, and *sanco*, llama blood mixed with corn meal. According to Hiram Bingham, villagers were still offering "idols" on the slopes of the mountain in 1865.

ceremonial offerings of goose and flamingo feathers, coca leaves, seashells, guinea pigs, raw meat, and *sanco*, llama blood mixed with corn meal.

Guaman Poma wrote that the many priests attending the temple included those high in the Inca hierarchy. Others performing temple services included *mamaconas*, women specially selected for this purpose. The temple did not lack for offerings of livestock and the harvest of whole fields were dedicated to it. The temple attracted pilgrims from all over the empire. The Coropuna deity spoke through an oracle, and, unlike the deities at other temples, would make pronouncements at any time of the year.

Journey to Achaymarca

During the 1980s, I had climbed a number of Andean peaks looking for archaeological sites. Reading up on Coropuna, I found only brief summaries of archaeological surveys for the area around Coropuna. Maucallacta was the only Inca site on the slopes of Coropuna higher than 4,000m, and no archaeological work had been done on an Inca site anywhere near the mountain. In 1988, José briefly visited

Achaymarca, a site at 4,030m near the western base of Coropuna. From what he saw of the ruins and their location near the mountain, he believed it quite likely the site was the temple of Coropuna.

In 1989, Jose and I set out for Achaymarca to test this hypothesis. Shining Path guerrillas had been seen in the area, so we didn't dawdle. Photographing the ruins, we sketched a rough plan of the area, then climbed up the Inca trail on the western slope of the mountain to 5,500 m, where it disappeared beneath the glacier.

About 12 km before Achaymarca, Jose and I came across some ruins we named Ajocancha after a nearby gully. Here we found a plaza approximately 17 x 48 m with a half-dozen structures built near its western wall. Rough boulders bordered both the eastern and southern sides. Steps cut into one of the boulders led up to the plaza, where shards lay scattered about on the surface. Close to the mountain, Ajocancha does not appear to have been a major site—possibly only a place for small groups to perform rituals.

High on the western side of Lake Pallacocha (4,730 m), we found more ruins—stone structures overlooking the lake. From here, we had a fine view of Coropuna, reflected in the water below. Alas, we found no shards to date the

COROPUNA
Astronomy and Cosmology

Is Achaymarca's location on the western side of Coropuna evidence of Incan astronomy or cosmology? Certainly, an observer in Achaymarca would see the sun rise behind Coropuna for most of the year. At the September equinox, the sun would rise behind the northernmost tip of the mountain.

Coropuna's two main summits are nearly the same height. From the September equinox to the December solstice, the sun moves in an arc over the mountain. This period, a time of planting and harvesting before the rainy season, was, and still is, of vital importance to Andean peoples and is a time of many fertility rituals and festivals. Although the importance of the equinox in Inca beliefs is still debated, solstices played a key role in Inca religion. It's perhaps no coincidence that the December solstice line (114° as seen from Achaymarca), leads directly to Ajocancha.

The sacred mountain Solimana is also visible from Achaymarca. In 1583, Albornoz wrote of the colonists at Solimana and that livestock was dedicated to its service. Pre-Incan people living nearby believed the mountain to be their creator. Today, many view Solimana as a place where souls reside, a mountain rich in gold and silver. Those who live on Coropuna's slopes at the present time look upon Solimana as female, one of the most venerated of deities, a goddess of plant and animal fertility.

ruins. Still, since the structures were close to the trail to Ajocancha and resembled the structures we'd seen there, we deemed it likely they were Incan. (Interestingly, in Quechua, "*palla*" means "noble woman" and "*cocha*," "lake." To the Incas, lakes were often seen as female—consorts of mountain gods. This belief persists in the Andes to this day.)

The ruins of Achaymarca lie between the mountains of Solimana and Coropuna. The main complex is a central walled plaza approximately 160 x 110 m with an artificial raised platform (*ushnu*). Over two hundred structures surround the plaza, and we found shards of Incan pottery lying about. I could discern no astronomical alignments of the plaza walls, although the southern wall, at 110° east, is close to the December solstice sunrise. Another section of wall on the north side of the plaza, at ca. 95° (i.e. oriented to the east), is aligned with the northern summit of Coropuna. It's unclear if these were intentional alignments or mere coincidence.

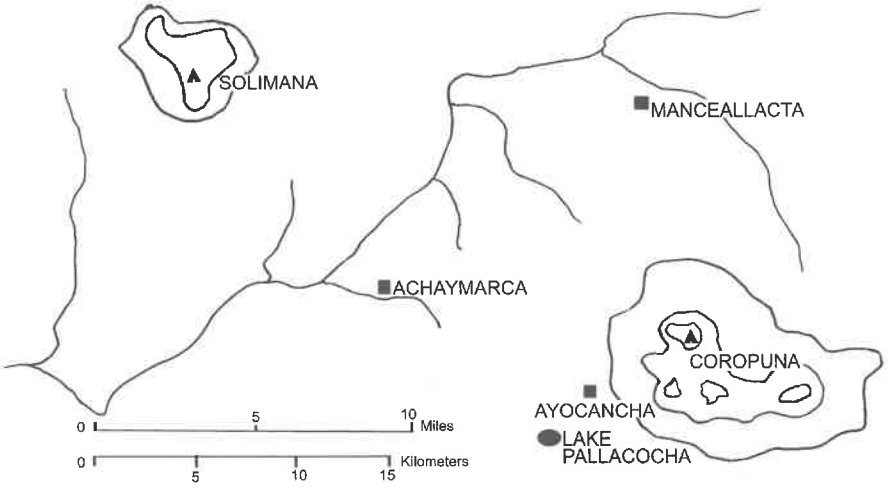
a relatively intact platform such as this is rare in the Andes.

The 9 x 6 m and 2.5 m high *ushnu*, built in part of worked stone, is found on the southern side of the plaza. The remains of a stairway are still visible on the platform's northern side. Major ceremonies took place on such platforms, which played a key role in Inca worship. Because of this, the Spanish made a point of destroying them as they obliterated the indigenous religion. To find a relatively intact platform such as this is rare in the Andes.

Several well-built structures, including a few with worked stone, lie near the south wall of the plaza—presumably buildings used by the Inca elite. More than 200 structures were built outside the central plaza. These rough-stone buildings may have housed those lower in the social hierarchy. A walled compound lies some 70 m east of the plaza, and 100 m beyond this one finds a large group of ruins. We found other structures 150 m north of the plaza and 50 m or so to the west, but none to the east or northeast to the Coropuna massif.

South, west, and east of the main complex, we came across nearly a dozen *chullpas*—funerary towers. Some were in good condition and contained bones, and in one measuring 2 x 3 x 2 m, we found four skeletons.

Inca ruins have been found in other areas near Coropuna, but all these sites are small and lack the fine



COROPUNA, SPIRIT WORLD

From Inca times to the present, Coropuna has been linked with the dead. Nearly 500 years ago, Guaman Poma wrote of the spirits gathering at Coropuna. Both Valderrama and Escalante write about people living today in the province of Cotabambas. Here, many believe that Saint Peter holds the key to a door on Coropuna. Through this door pass the souls of the dead. The door faces east and is reputedly surrounded by twelve lower mountains which guard it. At Puquio, northwest of Coropuna, people also believe Coropuna to be the abode of the dead.

There are variations on Coropuna's role. Some believe the mountain to be a kind of purgatory. For example, Ossio was told that souls reaching Coropuna are freed of impurities before they pass on to heaven. Roel wrote of others who believe that souls pass through Coropuna en route to other volcanoes, finally ending up in Solimana. Bingham was told there was a warm paradise atop Coropuna where souls dallied on their way to heaven. The belief that the dead reside in mountains is widespread throughout the Andes and may come from the once widely held view that some people were descended from mountain deities.

As we have seen, funerary towers were built near Coropuna in pre-Hispanic times. In 1965, a villager discovered two funerary bundles on Coropuna. Some suspected they had been sacrificed on the summit. José later learned that the bodies were found on the lower slopes. There is nothing about the bodies to indicate human sacrifice, although its likely such sacrifices did occur.

masonry and other significant religious characteristics of Achaymarca. Furthermore, the mountain is not visible from many of these lesser ruins, and visibility would seem rather important in a temple complex dedicated to Coropuna. The ruins Bingham described finding on the slopes of Coropuna are minor and clearly not those we found in Achaymarca. There is scant evidence to support Bingham's claim that the ruins he describes are the temple of Coropuna.

Our detailed on-site examination convinced both José and myself that the ruins at Achaymarca are the remains of the Inca temple of Coropuna mentioned in the chronicles. We believe the evidence supporting this conclusion is compelling.

For one, Achaymarca meets all the obvious requirements for a shrine. Of all the sites on the slopes of Coropuna dating to the Inca period, Achaymarca is the most significant, possessing structures both for an elite and for religious ceremonial purposes. Certainly the complex could easily have accommodated the numerous visitors pouring in from distant areas, as described by Cieza de Léon. The site furthermore provides views of Coropuna (and to the rising sun behind it), as well as mountain Solimana. Both mountains were sacred deities to the Incas when the Spanish arrived. Achaymarca's position between the two mountains would surely enhance its religious significance.

Near the year-round Inca settlements in the Arma Valley, the Incas harvested bountiful crops from a 10 km section of the valley where crops are grown to this day. From the fields came grain to feed the priests and *mamaconas* dedicated to the service the temple at Achaymarca as well as the many local servants and pilgrims who traveled there from many regions. It would have been difficult to maintain such a temple complex at a higher elevation or in a more remote area. Indeed, it would be hard to find a place better situated for religious purposes close to the resources needed to support it.

Why did the chroniclers say so little about Coropuna?

In short, the evidence supporting Achaymarca as the temple of Coropuna is substantial. Given the above, it is fairly certain that we have established the location of the temple of Coropuna, which has been unknown for centuries.

The question remains: Why did the chroniclers say so little about Coropuna? This is puzzling, considering that Cieza de Léon stresses the temple's importance. However Coropuna is not alone in this respect. Both Vilcanota and Ancocagua, third and fourth on Cieza de Léon's list of the five most important Inca temples, are similarly not described in any detail in the chronicles. Built in relatively isolated areas and their whereabouts eventually forgotten, all three temples were largely overlooked by a later generation of historians and archaeologists. Cieza de Léon was among the earliest chroniclers of Inca religion after the Spanish conquest of 1532. When other chroniclers began writing in the late 1500's, Coropuna would have been a distant memory.

There remains much to learn about the temple of Coropuna. Among other things, excavation will shed more light on the temple's function, its relationship with other Inca sites in the region, and the origins of its pilgrims. Further study of this important temple is certain to broaden our knowledge of Inca religion and practice in one of the least known regions of the Inca empire.

COROPUNA

Mountain God of the Andes

Unfortunately, there's little information in the chronicles about what Coropuna meant to the Incas. But there are clues.

In 1583, Albornoz wrote that the Incas venerated the mountains that "faced the ocean" over other mountains because from these peaks flowed water that allowed the desert to bloom. Ulloa Mogollon does not specifically mention Coropuna, but in 1586, he wrote that the Incas worshiped snow-capped peaks as the source of water they used to irrigate their fields. Indeed, glacial melt from Coropuna is the main source of water for miles around. To the Incas, Coropuna was surely a mountain god they looked to for water, good weather, and bountiful crops. Even today, those who live on its slopes worship Coropuna for its life-giving waters above all other mountains in the area .

It's also likely that Coropuna was revered for its distinctive powers over livestock as well as crops. There is mention in 1583 of an increase in llama and alpaca herds near Sara Sara, another mountain worshiped by the Incas not far to the west of Coropuna. People living there still make offerings to the mountain god Coropuna to increase their herds. Coropuna is likewise worshiped by herders of wool-bearing animals in the Arequipa region.

In Quechua, *"coro"* (or *"koro"*) means "cut off". *"Puna"* refers to "the cold highlands". "Coropuna" thus describes the mountain's truncated summit. How the summit of Coropuna got lopped off is recounted in a legend from the province of Chumbivilcas. In this legend a great battle took place between Coropuna and the deity known as Inca. After creating Alqa Victoria, a valley at the headwaters of the Velille River, Inca built a canal that wound down the slopes of Coropuna to the south. When he was finished, Coropuna urinated. Then Inca urinated on top of Coropuna, and the mountain became pregnant. A child was born. When Inca refused to recognize it as his, Coropuna attacked him with fire. In fighting back, Inca broke off Corapuna's summit with stones from his sling. Then, to escape the fire, Inca dove into the lake at Vilcanota to resurface in Alqa Victoria in Chumbivilicas. From here, he dispatched carved stones for the construction of Cuzco.

It would be impossible to build a canal from Coropuna to Chumbivilcas and Cuzco, 100 kms to the southwest and in a different watershed. Still, the legend serves to symbolically link these regions. The legend further connects Coropuna to the Incas, who indeed built temples on Coropuna's slopes.

East of Coropuna, the Collagua people inhabited the Colca Valley. Interestingly, in the chronicles we see that in 1586 they spoke of their ancestors who came from Collaguata, a volcano near Alqa Victoria. This suggests that the colonists Albornoz mentions as coming to Coropuna may well have been from the Chumbivilcas region.

Yet another Andean legend, first recorded in the 1980s, recounts a battle between Coropuna and Hualca Hualca, a mountain that towers above the Colca Valley. In this legend, Hualca Hualca blocked the sun's rays in the morning. This angered Coropuna. The gods fought with slings, and Hualca Hualca struck Coropuna in the head with a boulder. From this wound, blood flowed out to form a lake. Boulders said to have been thrown by Coropuna can still be seen on the slopes of Hualca Hualca.

Until recent times, Cabanaconde villagers, who believed themselves descended from the Hualca Hualca diety, kept this legend alive with staged battles, slinging apples and fruit instead of stones. These ceremonial clashes took place in February, a month of agricultural festivals when offerings are made to Pachamama and the mountain deities for a successful harvest. Just as in other parts of the Andes, villagers looked upon the blood shed in battle as an offering to local deities to increase fertility.

There are modern-day myths about Coropuna. In one, the mountain god Sara Sara gave all of its riches to Coropuna. This accounts for why Sara Sara lacks the minerals and water that Coropuna has in abundance.

Acknowledgements

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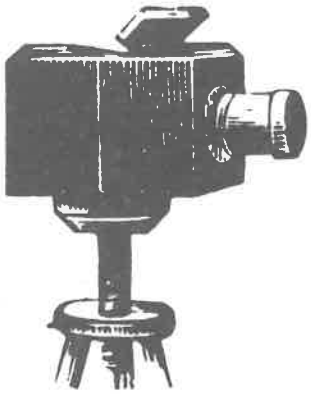
A Camera for Valerio



Maralyn Lois Polak

Valerio had to have a camera, a Polaroid camera, so my friend Mary Grace got him one. Valerio lived in a mud hut on a mountainside overlooking Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. Valerio could not read or write. His hut had no water, no toilet, no heat, no phone, no power, no windows or doors, only spaces for windows and doors. The roof was corrugated tin; rain sounded like thugs jumping on your skull.

Maybe Valerio wanted a camera because he was happy. What was happy? Mary Grace said Lake Atitlan was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. When Valerio wasn't weaving pulsaras, the rainbow wristbands called Friendship Bracelets (Tie one on, make a wish, wear until it falls off, your wish comes true), he was helping build the house of his future neighbor, a millionaire farmer from the mainland whose dream was glass and terra-cotta and lava rock, a huge courtyard carved from the cliff, volcanoes from any vista. One hundred seventy three flagstone steps led down from Valerio's hut to the rich man's place. Soon as the mansion was done, Valerio would be its caretaker; he'd never have to worry about finding work again.

Maybe Valerio wanted a camera because he knew what wealth was. What was wealth? The whitewashed walls of Valerio's hut were bare save for a photo of a bride and groom, in color. I did not know Valerio. I thought it was his wedding. I thought he was married to the young girl who greeted us sweetly at the gate by the dirt road where we parked our rented car.

Maralyn Lois Polak is a journalist and poet in Philadelphia.

Already, Mary Grace had carried Valerio's camera from Philadelphia, where the Mayor had once bombed his own citizens...

We had come to Valerio's that day—was it August or October?—not by Mary Grace's usual route driving directly through the riverbed. That was impossible during rainy season. We had seen a pickup truck with a gringa, her baby, its governess, and a wailing laborer almost swallowed by floodtide, only to be towed out safely at the last instant. We could, Mary Grace pointed, use that log set up to walk across the roiling, rocky waters. That log!! Light-headed from the unaccustomed 5,000-ft. altitude, I didn't trust my balance, but I hated to say no in this new country. Already, I felt like I had flunked Wilderness Training, where if you don't survive, it's your choice, your responsibility, your fault.

The detour, which Mary Grace finally remembered after suggesting we ditch the car and hike the three hours it would take by foot to Valerio's, meant finding a bridge that looked like it came from an Erector set, then negotiating one tricky curve after the next on roads which were barely conceptual, going from cobblestones to dirt to swampy ruts.

Already, Mary Grace had carried Valerio's camera from Philadelphia, where the Mayor had once bombed his own citizens...to Guatemala City where there was a pygmy replica of the Eiffel Tower downtown because some General or Politician or Dictator went to Paris and wanted what he saw...to Panajachel where there had been no electricity for three days so you had to worry that the food you couldn't eat anyway would be spoiled and more dangerous...to this late afternoon of lengthening shadows as I fervently wished I was not trespassing on what seemed like an intimacy.

Why would Valerio want a camera? And what would he photograph?

Valerio spoke his native Indian dialect, some Spanish, and no English. Mary Grace spoke Spanish but couldn't use a camera. I spoke no Spanish but knew how to use a camera; indeed, I had brought along my own, a nifty $15.95 Keystone automatic flash model with built-in telephoto lens. I do not want to romanticize his dignity, but that is the right word for Valerio's demeanor. Despite his months of waiting, he did not grab eagerly for the Polaroid box which had traveled a thousand miles. Yet my mind focuses on his intense yearning for the thing, his absorption; he paid no attention to the feast-day firecrackers which constantly went off in the distance like gunfire.

Would Valerio take pictures of his dog, the rib-skinny tan bitch that stopped nursing its clutch of pups long enough to nip Mary Grace in the leg?

Why would Valerio want a camera? And what would he photograph? Valerio works for hours to weave a single bracelet which he sells for the equivalent of two cents each. Would Valerio take pictures of his dog, the rib-skinny tan bitch that stopped nursing its clutch of pups long enough to nip Mary Grace in the leg when she stared too hard? Would he take pictures of the rich man's house with its odd furniture shipped from strange ports and its empty modern pottery no village woman would ever fill with water from the river and bear on her head?

Would he take pictures of Don Pedro the textile merchant who can't forget when Affluent Angelique took his picture with her old Instamatic and he found her so comely he gave her a dress? Would he take pictures of the German and French and Japanese and American buyers who strip the Indian marketplaces—the famous Gringo Trail—like locusts, plundering Chichicastenango, Xela, San Jorge, even Santiago where even a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew did not keep guerrillas from killing his people, or the military, which was killing his people?

The Army wears camouflage, rides in jeeps, and flashes long rifles with bayonets. The Death Squad rides in plain cars and dresses in blue. The guerrillas are village boys who congregate in secret at night with their guns and their hopes and their gripes; in another country, they might be a bowling team. Would Valerio take their pictures? Would he take pictures of the political signs painted on boulders along nearly every road—"MAS" in red, for "more," outlined in blood; roosters, stars, mysterious initials, promises, threats? Would Valerio paint his own signs? Would he make trouble with his pictures?

Valerio's mother walks into the room to watch. She's probably younger than I am. She wears many shiny golden necklaces, not metal but the tiny blown glass globes of Christmas ornaments. What she sees is me reading to Mary Grace, Mary Grace talking to Valerio, Valerio gesturing to me. The camera instructions have become a passion play. We take a picture of Valerio and the girl. Stand closer, I urge them, thinking they are shy newlyweds.

They are not. They are not married. The girl is his cousin, just his cousin, Mary Grace tells me later. Valerio's cousin goes to fix tortillas over a fire, in another room, open to the lake. She gives us each a tortilla. It is the best I've ever had. I take a picture of her, with my own camera. As for the wedding photo on the wall, it's a picture postcard, no one Valerio knows. Something Valerio had admired, and kept; a gringo couple, tuxedo, white gown, milky grins, the works.

For the stray dogs of Panajachel annually poisoned to make the streets more palatable for tourists.

How do you explain to someone who cannot read or write or understand your language or you his that this button will make the picture lighter; or, if he is dissatisfied with how one turns out, he can make the next better? That perhaps with the right adjustment he can cure Guatemala itself—the puppet presidents strung out on drugs, the murders, the corruption, the incompetence, the poverty, the disease, the hunger, the pollution, the garbage, the hypocrisy?

A cure for Clara Arco's blonde bitterness bred by her diplomat father's crazy feuds. A cure for Alejo's sinister bike trips fueled by the moon. For Wheelchair Warren's capitalist paraplegia. For Patio Paul's ennui and perpetual gastric pain. For Junkie Perfecto's misplaced mercenary zeal. For Giggling Estrella's inane art of grinning cactus cut from plywood. For Swiss Veronique the Black Market Money Changer's serial swindles by savage lawyers. For Santa Fe Sam's fears of Feds finding his stash of antique jade and slingshots. For Ponytail Pete's heartbreak when Shiatsu Sue split to Disneyland with Tipica Tony the lunky souvenir manufacturer who had the only Fax machine in town. For English Warren's lame disco where the longhaired blonde guys with Jesus smiles can't dance real Salsa to save their souls.

For the 67 distinctly different shades of green on the terraced hills with their exquisite geometry of growing corn, beans, and wheat. For the Indian women pounding their laundry on the stones of creeks and streams. For the stray dogs of Panajachel annually poisoned to make the streets more palatable for tourists. For my friend Mary Grace and her desperate landlust. For all of them. And for me, silly and shallow and sentimental, convinced I would die here of bad water or bad politics or bad driving or bad flying or bad thoughts.

For all of us, Valerio, please take our pictures. Please make it better, Valerio. Transform our reality into something true, something beautiful we can stop and hold and own, something we can share. Something rare we can see always, Valerio, something we can have, Valerio, when we don't have it any more.

SAEC in cyberspace
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Y2K

In some countries, the Year 2000 (Y2K) "millennium bug" may cause computer-based systems to malfunction. Traveling, working or living abroad in South America during the change of the millennium? Do consider how Y2K might affect your travel plans. Transportation may be disrupted due to canceled services, unconfirmed bookings, and delays at customs. Electricity, water, and gas supply may be interrupted. You may not be able to use your credit or ATM cards. Telecommunications may fail.

Luckily many South American governments have established programs to resolve national Y2K problems. Here is a list of official Y2K sites for countries in South America. Admittedly, some are more professional and reassuring than others; Uruguay's Y2K web site has a cartoon of someone taking refuge in a mailbox (to hide from Y2K problems, presumably?) and features a little bug that follows your cursor around as you browse the site.

South America
http://www.foroy2kamericadelsur.org

Argentina
http://www.sfp.gov.ar/2000 (Spanish)

Bolivia:
http://www.sisteco-bo.com/bolgob-y2k

Brazil
http://www.a2000.gov.br

Chile
http://www.a2000.cl

Colombia
http://www.2000.gov.co

Ecuador
http://www.superban.gov.ec/doc/impacto

Peru
http://www.inei.gob.pe/pia2000

Uruguay
http://www.opp.gub.uy/y2k

Venezuela
http://www.platino.gov.ve/ano2000

Patagonia

Guide to Chilean Patagonia
http://www.chileaustral.com/

Go no further for information on southern Chile's national parks, travel agencies, lodging, transport, pubs and restaurants, newspapers, environmental organizations, arts and literature, and upcoming events.

Andes Web: Guide to Skiing and Snowboarding in the Andes of Chile and Argentina
http://www.andesweb.com/

Before you hit the slopes, check out this vast source for information on ski resorts, snow reports, ski maps, guide books, snowboarding terrain, and more.

The Mapuche Page
http://members.aol.com/mapulink3/mapulink-3i/mapu-nation.html

Learn more about the Mapuche Indians of southern Chile and Argentina, the third largest indigenous group in South America. This web site has extensive information on history, the Mapudungun language, religion, and current public policy affecting the Mapuche.

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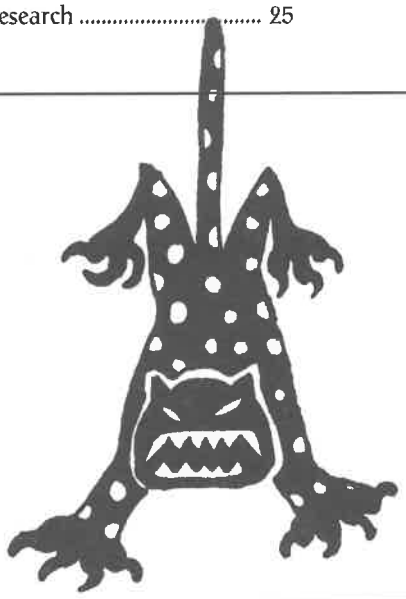
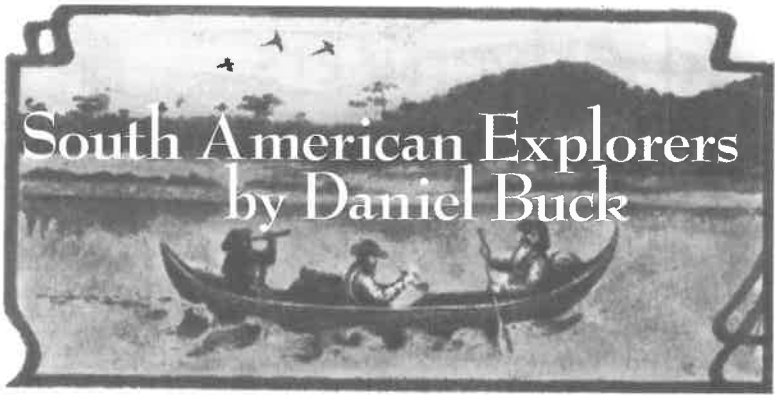
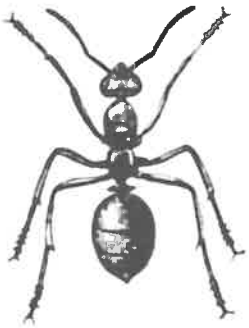




A. Henry Savage Landor



The "words traveler and liar are synonymous," suggested Concolorcorvo in *El Lazarillo de Ciegos Caminantes*, a picaresque narrative of his early 1770s journey from Buenos Aires to Lima. A prime example of the type was English globetrotter A. Henry Savage Landor (1867-1924).

In his autobiography, *Everywhere* (1924), Landor wrote that within a few months after starting school, he "could speak four languages—English, Italian, French, and German—fairly well and was always the first of the class at everything except memorizing." His sole deficiency he attributed to a fall on the head. By his twenties, he was on the road, jaunting through Europe, North Africa, North America, and Japan and mingling, so he said, with royalty, literary figures, politicians, and other dignitaries. He breathlessly reported, among other things, that Wilbur Wright had envied his airplane-engine design and that James McNeill Whistler had admired his artistic talent. By 1891, he had produced his first book, *Alone with the Hairy Ainu*, a thrilling account of his foray on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. He surmised that the shaggy and, according to him, cannibalistic Ainu might be the "missing link," though from what to what is unclear. Another thrilling and incredible trek to Tibet yielded *In the Forbidden Land* (1898). Equally comfortable at blazing trails and pounding typewriters, he wrote up subsequent travels in *Across Coveted Lands* (1902), *The Gems of the East* (1904), *Tibet and Nepal* (1905), *Across Widest Africa* (1907), and *An Explorer's Adventures in Tibet* (1910). (These books are highly valued today, often fetching prices in excess of $500.)

In early 1911, Landor landed in Brazil with the aim of crossing and charting unexplored Mato Grosso and Amazonia. Aside from a handful of porters—mainly convicts whom he hired along the trail—Landor was a one-man expedition, but he brought along enough equipment and provisions to field an invasion force: 1,000 tins of sardines, bottled fruits, biscuits, three gallons of castor oil, six cameras, 1,400 glass plates, one typewriter, 12 repeating rifles, several handguns, several thousand rounds of ammunition, 20 pairs of shoes, tents, shovels, six thermometers, eight compasses, and so on.

16 days on the march without a single sardine or drop of castor oil.

Even in the depths of green hell, Landor customarily dressed in street clothes—in his view, jungle attire was for sissies—and never carried a gun. At one point, he and his tattered band (which had shrunk to a brace of porters) were reduced to hacking through the Mato Grosso on foot; they ran out of food and were 16 days on the march without a single sardine or drop of castor oil. According to Landor, the "torture inflicted by stinging ants" stimulated their senses enough to keep them alive.

Landor's startling discoveries on this expedition included claims that the number of Indians in the forest was much smaller than commonly thought—only "a few hundreds"—and that those whom he met (and photographed and calibrated) were not of Mongolian stock as also commonly thought, but were of Australian, Polynesian, or Malayan origin. In Landor's world, wonders never ceased. He was very much in the tradition of first-white-man here and there: lost tribes discovered, unmapped lands charted, unknown rivers named, and unscaled mountains conquered (without equipment and at road-runner speeds).

The wild aborigines he supposedly had discovered were, in fact, mission Indians.

The "words traveler and liar are synonymous,"

Across Unknown South America, Landor's two-volume narrative of his trek, came out in 1914 to favorable notices (the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* termed it "a valuable addition to any library"), but dissenters were soon queuing up. Theodore Roosevelt, just back from his River-of-Doubt expedition to the Mato Grosso, referred in his book *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (1914) to "those alleged explorers, among whom Mr. Savage Landor stands in unpleasant prominence." Roosevelt's Brazilian colleague, legendary explorer Cândido Rondon issued a public letter disputing Landor's account: "I can guarantee you that . . . Landor did not cross a hand's breadth of land that had not been explored, the greater part of it centuries ago." Rondon said that with the exception of one brief episode when he got himself lost, the Englishman had hewed to roads and telegraph-line paths, and the wild aborigines he supposedly had discovered were, in fact, mission Indians.

Ironically, *Across Unknown South America* was not the over-the-top, simply unbelievable story that was Landor's trademark. Aside from the deep-in-the-jungle rhetoric found in most such books of the era and the occasional pseudo-scientific statement, the volumes contained a fairly hum-drum narrative (for example, altitude readings at every rest stop) about what was an arduous, though hardly pioneering, expedition. On his year-long adventure, Landor had traveled north (largely by train, riding up front on the cow-catcher) from São Paulo to Goiás Velho, west by mule into the Mato Grosso to Diamantino (in the diamond district north of Cuiabá), and then by canoe down the Rio Arinos (thoughtfully naming each island he paddled by) toward the Rio Tapajós. The zone was unknown to his readers, though not to the rubber tappers, diamond hunters, and Indians who lived there. Near the junction with the Tapajós, Landor ventured off on foot east towards the Madeira. It was here that he stumbled about, ran out of food, and was kept alive by the stinging ants. Most of the remainder of the trip, to Belém and then back up the Amazon to Peru, was on the relative comfort of river steamers.

"His 'unknown South America' was unknown only to himself"

Landor died the year his autobiography was published, but his fame survived. John Keay devotes an entire chapter of *Explorers Extraordinary* (1986), his survey of the "lunatic fringe" of nineteenth-century roamers, to Landor and calls him "the most persistent, active, and unstoppable traveler of his day." Keay tells of the withering reaction that Landor's lecture at the Sorbonne on his Brazilian achievements received from the French press, which said that his "geographical observations were about as valuable as those of Jules Verne; that his 'unknown South America' was unknown only to himself"; and that he was the author "of '*une série inépuisable de péripéties fantaisistes.*'"

Hilaire Belloc immortalized the fabled explorer with an epigram: "A. Henry Savage Landor/nothing lacked except for candor."

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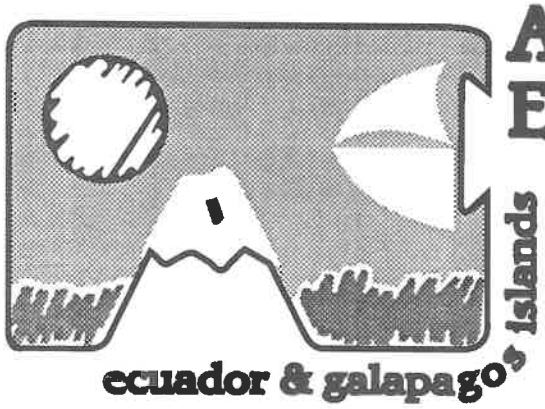

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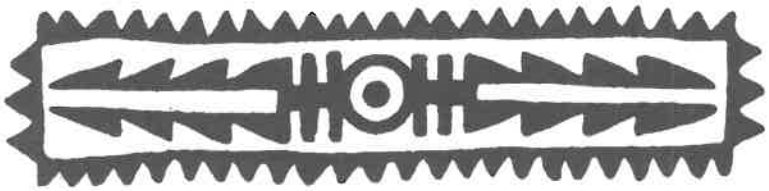

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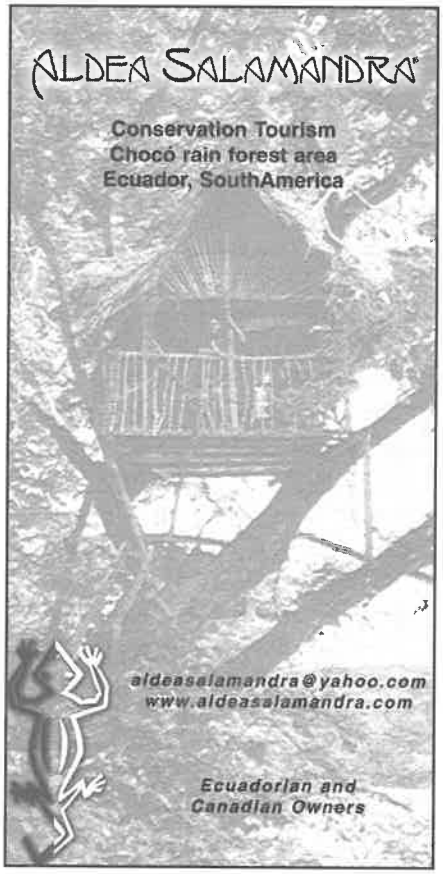

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Letters, continued from page 6.

and a native speaker, you obviously have much better chances of finding a job. Many small language institutes and even larger cultural centers do their own in-house, pre-service training. None hire sight unseen, nor do they pay airfare for applicants, even for well-qualified ones.

Whatever your qualifications, local hiring is the only realistic way to find a job, unless you come with some institutional support, i.e. Peace Corps, World Teach. I don't know of any places other than private, bilingual elementary and secondary "American" schools that recruit and hire from the U.S. (and most of them require certification).

If you're willing to pay your own airfare and look for something when you are in-country, keep in mind that salaries are low in this part of the world (with quite a bit of variation between countries and institutions). Most teachers I know work two part-time jobs to support themselves. Foreigners especially, who don't have their families to live with, will probably need more money to live on than nationals.

Obviously, knowing at least a little Spanish is desirable. If you have some extra time and money, consider taking a language and culture course, or a summer abroad program from a U.S. university as a way to get set up in a new country and to make a few contacts before beginning a job search. There are dozens of these programs in Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.

Good luck!
Sincerely,

William Ancker
Regional English Language Officer
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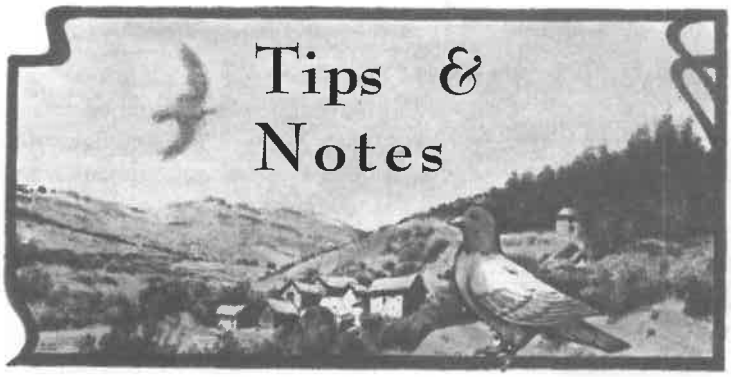

And a Child Shall Lead Them

The Children's Environmental Trust (CET) was created in the belief that the youth of today hold the key to preserve the rainforests of tomorrow.

CET sponsors children's rainforest workshops which include a year-long curriculum for studying rainforest ecology and culture, immersion in the tropical rainforests of Peru and Costa Rica, and a follow-up program committed to encouraging student environmental advocacy.

CET programs has also funded sustainable development projects in rainforest villages and the construction of canopy access and other research facilities for students and visiting scientists.

If you're a teacher interested in CET programs, contact:
Children's Environmental Trust
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Tel: 616-772-7250 / Fax: 616-748-1152
E-mail: cethq@iserv.net

CET will send you a video and information packet. They can also arrange to have a CET representative visit your classroom for an ecology slide presentation.

Sangay Guides

Member John Parks writes:

I was pleasantly surprised to see the feature article on Sangay in Issue 55 of the *South American Explorer*, especially since I'm working with a new group of experienced mountain guides called the Asociación de Guías Indígenas (AGIG).

All AGIG guides are from the indigenous communities of Guargualla, in the province of Chimborazo, Ecuador. With its close proximity to Sangay National Park (named a World Heritage Site for its biodiversity), the Guargualla indigenous community has high influence over the future of the park. Sangay is often threatened by fires set to clear land for crops and livestock. Thus, the economic alternative of a guiding service helps promote local conservation.

If you're planning to ascend Sangay, consider contacting the AGIG at 1430 Casa Ind.gena: Guayaquil y Juan de Velasco, Riobamba, Ecuador, tel: 593-3-941-728.

Additionally, the 28 men and women that make up the AGIG are looking for a volunteer English teacher to improve their ability to communicate with foreign climbers. If you can help, please contact the AGIG or myself at:
jmp_worldtraveler@yahoo.com.

Sober on the Summit

In January 2000, twelve men and women, ranging in age from 19 to 51, will make a summit attempt on Argentina's 22,844 ft Cerro Aconcagua. However, the climbers may consider this arduous ascent simple compared to their personal struggles; each is in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction.

Andrew Wainwright and Scott Gilbert, a pair of recovering addicts, dreamed up the Sober on the Summit expedition to focus national attention on sobriety and recovery from alcohol and drug addiction and to raise $500,000 in patient aid donations for institutions that provide treatment for addicts.

Asked about the danger of attempting to scale the tallest mountain outside of the Himalayas, Gilbert answered, "I'd rather die scaling Mt. Aconcagua completely sober than live a single day again as an addict."

SOBER ON THE SUMMIT
THE CHIRON FOUNDATION

If you'd like more information on Sober on the Summit, contact:
The Chiron Foundation
1043 Grand Avenue #379
Saint Paul, MN 55105
Tel: 651-291-1996

or visit the Sober on the Summit web site at www.soberonthesummit.org.

Yossi Brain, 1967-1999

Yossi Brain died in an avalanche on Saturday the 25th of September while mountaineering with friends on "El Presidente" (5,700m) in the Apolobamba range in Northern Bolivia. Dana Witzel was also killed in this avalanche.

Yossi and Dana were climbing on the same rope up a new route on El Presidente when they triggered an avalanche which caught them both. Their friends Eric and Dakin were climbing a different route on the same mountain and saw the entire incident. They were quickly able to reach the avalanche, but Yossi and Dana were already dead.

While this is a very sad time for all of us we can take some consolation from the fact that they died doing what they loved.

Yossi touched the lives of a lot of people, through his lively, bright, and often irreverent sense of humor which colored his guiding, his books, his articles and above all his spirit. His life was short, but he achieved a lot in the time he had, making two different and successful careers, and providing inspiration to many. I know that for his family and friends his spirit will live on.

His body was cremated in La Paz and several mountaineering friends took the

ashes to the summit of Illimani (6,439m). A copy of Yossi's *Trekking in Bolivia* signed by many friends in La Paz has been left at the site of the accident together with a bottle of his favorite beer, a simple but meaningful memorial to all who knew him well. A poem written by Dana was also left at this site.

Friends who wish to contact Yossi's family can do so by e-mail to Family@mbrain.freeserve.co.uk.

—Jean Brown

Autochrome Comes to The Altiplano

On a welcome break from herding, field work, and wool spinning, eleven Aymara campesinos assembled in the yard of a Bolivian altiplano hacienda for a photograph. The year was approximately 1920, and the camera was loaded with an Autochrome plate, an early form of color photograph.

The result is more akin to a painting than a picture. The men are wearing flat-brimmed, tall-crowned white or brown *sombreros ovejones*—homemade sheep's wool hats—over *luchos* or *chullos*. Luchos, knitted stocking caps without earflaps, predated the ear-flapped chullos that are typical today. Wrapped around the men's necks or draped over their shoulders are long shawls. The second man from the left has folded his shawl in the *protocolo* style, with both ends falling down his back, meaning that he is on an errand of some importance. The man standing in the center is garbed in a *poncho de luto*, a black mourning poncho.

Chicotes—livestock whips in which several feet of braided leather are attached to a wooden handle decorated with tin or brass bands—entwine the men's torsos. The lone woman, oddly hatless, has an *aguayo* (a carrying cloth) tied on her back and a brightly patterned *iscayo* (mantle) draped over her *almillia* (homespun blouse). In the upper left corner of the photo is a *kheakhea* bush, the leaves of which are used to make a soothing infusion for sore throats.

Autochrome, the earliest widely available color process, was patented by the Lumière brothers in France in 1904 and was in the hands of eager photographers by 1907. Within a few years, the Lumière enterprise was producing 6,000 plates a day, and it remained in business until the advent of color film—Agfacolor and Kodachrome—in the 1930s. The first color photograph to appear in the *National Geographic Magazine*, in 1914, was a Lumière Autochrome. Thirteen years later, the *Geographic* published W. Robert Moore's eighteen Autochrome images of altiplano scenes as "High Lights in the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes."

The Lumières' technique required a glass plate "coated with microscopically small grains of potato starch dyed green, red, and blue," as Helmut Gernsheim explains in his *Concise History of Photography*, and with "a thin film of panchromatic emulsion." The emulsion-coated glass plate was exposed, developed, and re-exposed, resulting in a "transparency composed of small specks of primary colors giving the effect of mixed colors, as in a *pointillist* painting." A 5x7 plate might hold 140 million starchy, chromatic specks. The chief deficiencies of the process were a long exposure time and a loss of clarity with enlargements.

In *The Art of the Autochrome: The Birthplace of Color Photography*, John Wood calls attention to the fact that the impressionist painters understood that the eye mixes color better than the hand. This is the attraction of Autochrome. It is pleasing to the eye. So pleasing, in fact, that it rebukes Walker Evans's malediction that "color photography is vulgar."

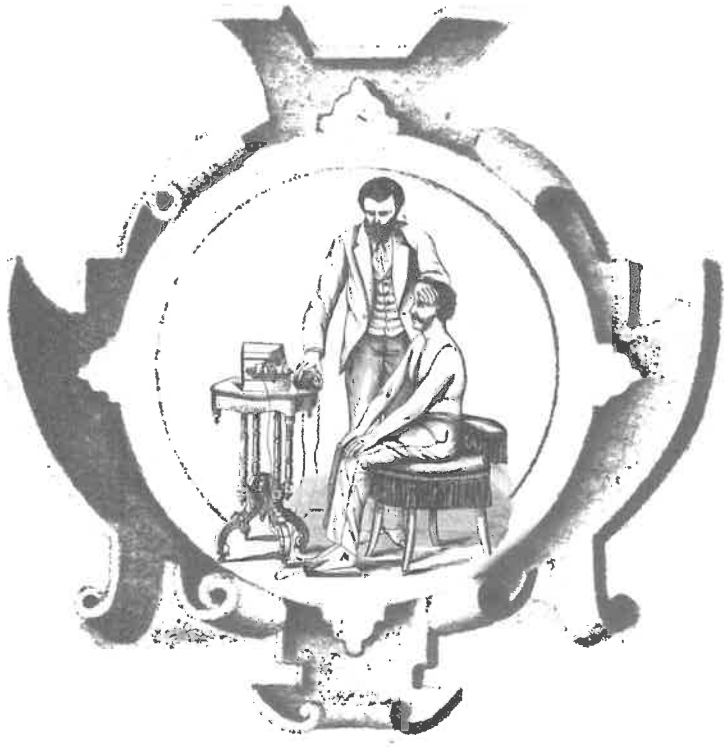
The early 1900s photo-secessionists, Wood writes, adopted Autochrome with a passion. Such noted photographers as Alfred Stieglitz and Eduard Steichen embraced autochromism as part of their artistic, pictorial revolt against the clichéd salon photography style of the era. Within a few years, their ardor cooled and they returned to black-and-white, but regional and travel photographers continued the romance.

The *National Geographic Magazine* published more than 1,000 Autochromes between 1914 and 1937, according to Wood, and the society today guards some 14,000 of these luminous images in its archives. But this collection pales in comparison with that of Albert Kahn, a wealthy French banker who in the first decades of the century sent photographers to the furthest reaches of the planet on an autochromatic extravaganza. Financial failure during the Depression brought an abrupt close to the project (Brazil was the only country photographed in South America), but the Museè Albert Kahn in Seine holds 72,000 plates, the luminous fruits of his global dream.

As for the irony of bringing to Bolivia a French photographic process that depended on a tuber native to the Andes, that was probably lost on the anonymous photographer of the campesino group portrait.

(Thanks to La Paz antiquarian Mario Morales for providing a copy of the Autochrome and to historian Antonio Paredes-Candia for his observations about the image.)

—Daniel Buck



Ask the Doctor

Dr. Joseph Breault graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine with combined MD and MPHTM (Tropical Medicine) degrees. Currently the staff physician at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, he has previously worked at the PHS Indian Hospitals in South Dakota and overseas in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Typhoid Fever

Q: A friend of mine came back from South America with a scary story about getting typhoid fever and almost dying! What's typhoid fever? What is the chance of dying from it?

A: A bacteria called Salmonella typhi causes typhoid fever. Worldwide, the CDC reports 16 million cases and 600,000 deaths. People with typhoid have fevers that peak at 103° to 104°F (39° to 40°C). Their heart rates are slower than normal for those at that body temperature. Rose spots may develop on their skin. Many report headache, malaise, stomach pains, and anorexia. Complications—perforated intestines, pneumonia, severe infection of the heart or brain—can cause death. The overall death rate for typhoid patients has been reported as high as 12-32% in the developing world, but less than 2% in industrialized countries.

Q: How do you get typhoid? What should I avoid while traveling?

A: Typhoid fever has been around since the 1870s. It is transmitted when bacteria from human feces gets into food and water. This can happen when untreated waste or sewage water is unwittingly used as a source of water for bathing or cleaning vegetables. Anytime someone else prepares your food in an developing country, there is a possibility of contamination. Chronic carriers shed Salmonella typhi in their stools for over a year after they have been "cured" of typhoid fever and could pass on bacteria if they handle your food.

The more widespread typhoid fever is in an area, the more likely you are to ingest contaminated food or water. Avoid risky foods and drinks—follow the rule of "boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it."

Also, avoid antacid medications for indigestion—your body's first line of defense is stomach acid, which kills bacteria.

Q: How long does it take to develop typhoid fever?

A: After exposure, it usually takes 10 to 14 days to develop symptoms. This depends on the amount of bacteria you ingest. If you ingest a large amount of the bacteria, the incubation period may be only 6 days. Conversely, you can develop symptoms as long as 50 days after ingestion if you consumed very small amounts of Salmonella typhi. Some people have mild cases of typhoid and don't have any symptoms.

Q: Should I get a typhoid fever vaccine before my next trip to South America?

A: Unless you're planning a to travel first-class throughout South America (highly unlikely if you're a member of the South American Explorers Club!), get vaccinated. There are two kinds of injectable vaccines. One has two doses given 4 weeks apart; a booster is given every 3 years. The other is a single dose that requires a booster every 2 years. With the oral vaccine, you take one capsule every 2 days for a total of 4 doses, and you'll need a booster every 5 years. Make sure you get vaccinated well before your departure date—it may take up

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to 2 weeks to develop immunity. The effectiveness of the vaccine is about 70%.

Q: Can you tell if you have typhoid fever from fever patterns?

A: Fever typically increases slowly over several days, peaks at 103° to 104°F (39° to 40°C), remains constant for 2 to 3 weeks, and then subsides. With the right antibiotics, the fever may disappear in 3 to 4 days. Many clinicians try to use fever patterns to diagnose typhoid fever, but the most effective method is using tissue cultures. Blood cultures identify Salmonella typhi up to 80 percent of the time, and bone marrow cultures have a 90 percent success rate.

Q: If I get a fever while I'm traveling in South America, and I think I've got typhoid, what should I do?

A: Seek local medical care immediately. Call the US Consulate for a list of recommended doctors. Local doctors will be familiar with the disease and can perform blood culture tests early on

Q: How is typhoid fever treated?

A: The antibiotics chloramphenicol, ampicillin, and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole have been traditional treatments. Because of resistance to these antibiotics, newer drugs (ciprofloxicin or ceftriaxone) are preferred. You can find out from blood cultures what antibiotics the strain of Salmonella typhi are resistant to. Interested in reading more? See the Centers for Disease Control typhoid web page at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/typhoidfever_g.htm.

You can email medical questions to Dr. Breault at jbreault@ochsner.org. Although the questions cannot be answered personally, a selection of questions will be answered and published in future issues of the South American Explorer.

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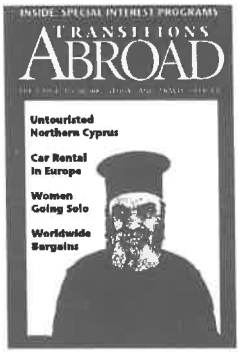

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Club News

Cusco Club News

An exciting few months for the Cusco crew. We have been busy expanding our facilities and services for members, and now are the proud owners of a completely, totally functioning club house! Yes, that's right...you know all those member services you take for granted in Quito and Lima? Well, we offer them here, too: a full range of books and maps, member e-mail, equipment storage, trip reports, library (still small...but getting better every day) and, of course, the now-famous Cusco Clubhouse Chocolate Chip Cookies!

Need we say all this would have been impossible but for all the kind and generous donations, handcarries, and chocolate chip suppliers—thank you one and all! The Cusco Club's two managers Boz Smith and Caz Bointon flew off to Tahiti, then on to Boz's New Zealand home to watch the rugby World Cup. Of course, this was hardly the time to be leaving the Cusco Club in the lurch, but since both are brawny, rugby-player types, well...maybe they needed the trip. Anyway, they're back in Cusco, running the Club, and handing out cookies.

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Year 2000 celebrations here are gearing up. People will flying into Cusco from around the world, now that it's billed as one of the 10 Most Desirable Places to Greet the New Millennium. And that's just the SAEC Clubhouse. Apparently, some visitors want to get to Machu Picchu, too. Do we anticipate a horde of psycho, crystal-waving weirdos soaking up the cosmic energy? You bet. Out-of-body memberships are a distinct possibility. And maybe even short-term life memberships (a week or so) for doomsday believers.

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What else? We want to thank our trusty crew: long term volunteers Seth and Danajean, Guy for all his map work, Isobel our cook, and Cathy, our new chica.

Lima Club News

Planning on getting a South American Explorers Club t-shirt to proclaim your loyalty to the Club? How passé. It's not that we aren't proud of the skilled artwork the club has laid to cotton. Nor do we in Lima take for granted the income generated from this line of fine attire. It's just that t-shirts are so . . . tame. Want to impress us? Really impress us? Then butterfly body art is where it's at. That's right—tattoo you! Hey, we'll work with you on this one. The Lima Clubhouse will arrange for large discounts at local boutiques for visible, permanent work. Biceps, calves, forearms, foreheads...need we inspire you further?

Manager Tim Currie and long-term staff member Janice Davies made their gallant return to the Lima Clubhouse after six- and eight-month absences, respectively. Both bring oodles of experience, knowledge, and enthusiasm to their posts. Also, volunteer Ian Wilcock is back at the Club after a one-month stint in England.

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After 3 years off the continent, former manager Richard Elgar blessed the country with his presence for a short stay, leading to many shared stories and ceviches. Honest-to-God explorer Paolo Greer made his way to Lima, much to the delight of staff and members who found themselves awash in maps, anecdotes, and offers to take them out to lunch.

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The highest ranking member of the Sendero Luminoso terrorist group was captured. Oscar Ramírez Durand "Feliciano" was reeled in from the central highland town of Cochas, five kilometers outside of Huancayo.

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Overland travel is the safest it has been in years. For overland travel between towns in the highlands, the Lima Club still recommends taking buses during the day. The area around Tingo Maria has been labeled an Orange Zone by the Peruvian government. (An Orange Zone is an area where the government does not maintain a military presence after dark.) Headed for Tingo Maria? Avoid night travel and take precautions when traveling to the surrounding areas, particularly to the edge of the jungle in the department of Huanuco.

When AeroPeru went belly up in March, members found they had limited choice in Peruvian airlines. Enter Lan Peru, now in full operation; AeroContinente is no longer the lone airline flying all major national routes. A number of smaller carriers are also flying lesser traveled routes, previously reached regularly only by bus. Contact the Lima Clubhouse or a recommended Peruvian travel agent for details.

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In August, workers at ENAFER, the government-owned rail service, protested the upcoming privatization of trains with a strike. By press time, all trains were running on schedule. For schedules and changes in service, check the official ENAFER web site at www.enafer.com and the SAEC webpage at www.samexplo.org.

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Lucho Zapater from Rainforest Expeditions gave a presentation at the Lima Clubhouse on the Tambopata-Candamo Reserve, drawing folks from all over. For more information about the reserve and efforts to protect it, please see Conservation International's website at www.conservation.org.

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Thanks are in order to our wondrous Peruvian staff members Julie Cruz and Felícita Nuñez. Not to be forgotten are volunteers Kevin "I'll battle aduanas" Floyd, Rachel "Anyone for tea?" Peel, Pascal Dorian, Kyle Smith, and former interim manager Katherine Dunphy for pitching in when most needed.

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Muscular handcarriers Tim Edgar, Tom Deligiannis, Virginia Oakley, Don Novogradac, former manager Jane Letham, geologist genius Dan Farber, Quito Club staff Linette Granja, and Quito Manager Diana Morris all deserve a round of applause for stocking the Lima Club with much needed supplies from far away places.

Let the noble deeds of these exemplary Members show you the way. As the books, maps, leg pouches, etc. pile up in Quito, Lima, Cusco, and Ithaca, your Club will be turning to you. Will you be there? Maybe we'll be writing about you before long and holding you up as a golden example to others.

Quito Club News

After the peace treaty between Ecuador and Peru, members ventured south on the Rio Napo through Nuevo Rocafuerte, hoping to pass through the yet-to-be-opened border. Not a simple task, but possible.

The famous Riobamba-Duran train has not run the full route for several years but is still very popular. The train concession was advertised for sale in The Latin American Trade Magazine. Apparently, the government would like to keep the train alive, in whatever way possible.

We constantly update our travel advisory boards at the Clubhouse and on the web to keep members up-to-date on climbing conditions, train schedules and any other important news for our members travelling in and away from Ecuador. www.samexplo.org.

Volunteer Melani continues to do a terrific job organizing the Thursday Night Presentations. Recent presenters include Miguel Morejon on the cloud forest, Karin Behrent on mud therapy, Randy Smith on the Huaorani, Susana Teran Castro on tropical fruit, Elaine and Carlos on chocolate production in Ecuador, Murray Coope on stop-motion photography, Rodrigo Danoso on peaks of the Andes, and Mimi Foyle on family life on a sustainable farm. Contact us in Quito for more information on the next "Evening at the Club" and upcoming weekend Club hikes.

Quito's latest board meeting took place in June. Staff and members attended in record numbers. We set goals, discussed the Club's financial and legal status, raised new concerns, and opened the floor for a general discussion. Join us for the next board meeting in January 2000!

Several thanks are in order. A big thank you to Larry Dressler, whose generous donation will go toward improving clubhouse security. Thank you also to the members who generously offered their luggage space for handcarries to and from the Unites States. Without you, keeping the Club well-stocked would be an impossible task. *Gracias* to all our volunteers, who keep the Quito Club running smoothly. Thanks, too, to the volunteers and members who support the La Tola project with time and donations.

La Tola

Los Niños Migrantes

by Diana Morris, Quito Clubhouse
explorer@saec.org.ec

La Tola was founded over 20 years ago in Quito, Ecuador by Salesian brothers. It provides shelter for over 400 homeless children and adults. La Tola also runs a program for orphaned and abused boys between 5 and 17.

The SAEC Quito Clubhouse is working on a pilot volunteer program for La Tola. The Quito Club will assess what types of volunteers La Tola needs and will provide thorough and concise volunteer descriptions to members interested in helping at La Tola. After evaluating a prospective volunteer's skills, the Quito club will then recommend a volunteer placement in La Tola where he or she can be of most help. More information on this program to come!

Christmas is just around the corner. A group of La Tola kids are helping us raise money to provide two rural communities with Christmas sweets. We hope this project will inspire the kids with the spirit of giving to those that have even less than they do. We will be celebrating Christmas with the La Tola kids, so any monetary, toy or clothing donations that you can give will be greeted joyously. We're also sponsoring our annual Christmas Eve dinner for the 1000 homeless people at La Tola. We would greatly appreciate both financial donations and volunteers to help prep, cook, and serve the dinner.

The cigar box project in the La Tola carpentry workshop continues. We have had some difficulty finding adults to supervise and teach the boys how to make high-quality boxes.

The weekend outings continue. One week, we took the boys—many of whom have never seen snow—sledding at Cotopaxi Park. They were fascinated by the climbers there. One climbing agency has offered to have a slide show and a practice session for the kids on climbing. On other weeks, we went fishing up the Rio Pita and made pizzas in Diana's wood oven. Future outings include a trip to the Viverium in Quito.

A heartfelt thank you to Rob Baron, Bob Silva, Tim Tadder, Wayne Lamphier, Mikael Wulft, Ian Simmons, Doug Simms and all the other SAEC members who have donated funds for La Tola projects. This money is earmarked for an emergency medical fund for the boys at La Tola, the cigar box project, weekend outings, and food staples for the kitchen.

The SAEC Quito Clubhouse collects donations and organizes volunteers to participate in nightly activities and monthly outings for La Tola's "Los Niños Migrantes." Donations can be sent care of the Ithaca office. 126 Indian Creek Road. Ithaca, NY 14850

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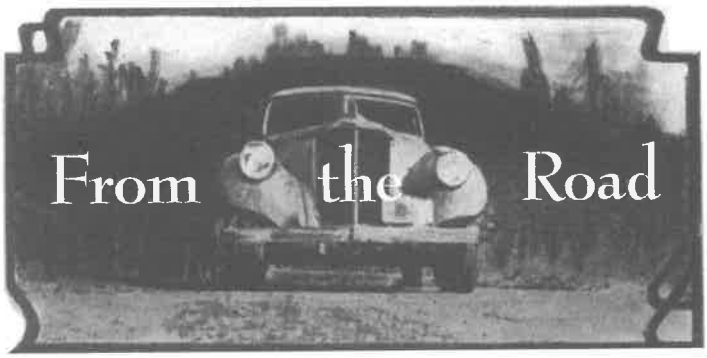


From Henry Pontarelli
and Lisa Wise
wisehen@hotmail.com

Preparing for a Long Stay in the Jungle

Henry and Lisa spent three months paddling from the Rio Branco to Manaus, Brazil.

We've developed numerous contacts who have both lived and worked in the jungle. Their counsel has ended with encouragement and good wishes.

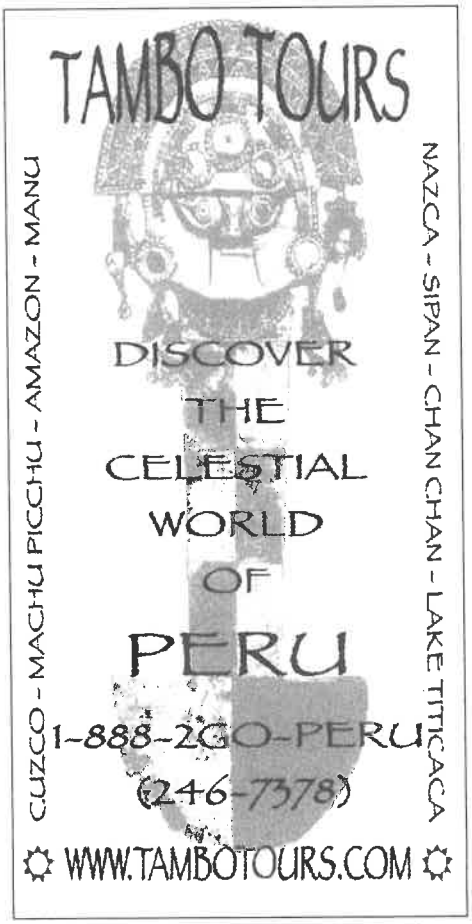
Rule #1 seems to be universal: Guard yourself from bites. Get in your tent or under a mosquito net before sundown. Keep covered with repellent, treat clothing and mosquito nets with Permethrin.

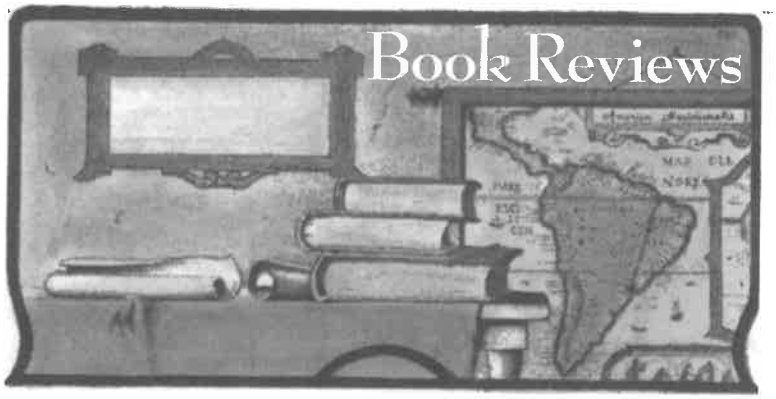
Other rules: Keep hydrated. Rinse with a bleach/water solution and then pat on antibacterial powder after wading in river water. Treat all water as if it's contaminated—use a filter and chemicals, or boil it. Wear appropriate clothing to protect from the sun and bugs. Always wear shoes. Carry a complete medical kit and familiarize yourself with its uses. Seek counsel on maladies you are not familiar with.

The medicines we're carrying include Cipro, Bactrim, Porsipen, Diphenoxylate, Immodium, Clofenimina, Fenistil, Neosporin, Silvedyne, Tobrex, Metrodazanole. Miscellaneous medical supplies include oral rehydration solution, a suture kit, band aids (assorted), Steri-Strips, gauze, a digital thermometer, slings, elastic bandages, mole skin, mole foam, and mace (for rabid animals and undesirable humans). A caveat: Gel caps dissolve in jungle environments.

About malaria: There are 2 types; one is non-fatal, the other fatal. Typical symptoms (we can personally account for these) are intense fever and chills (usually in the evening, depending on when you were stung) followed by exhaustion and an apparent return to health. This pattern can continue for anywhere up to 8 weeks, the fever usually tapering off. Fatal malaria is marked by a darkening urine and somnolence...get help. Present wisdom suggests Mefloquine or Lariam, 1 pill per week, 2 weeks before entering a jungle area, during your stay in the rainforest, and 4 weeks after.

We procured our medicine in Lima at Botica 24 Horas, Perricholi No.195, San Isidro, Tel: 442 2219. We worked with Yadira, who had a vast knowledge of pharmaceuticals. Highly recommended.





Travels in a Thin Country

Sara Wheeler

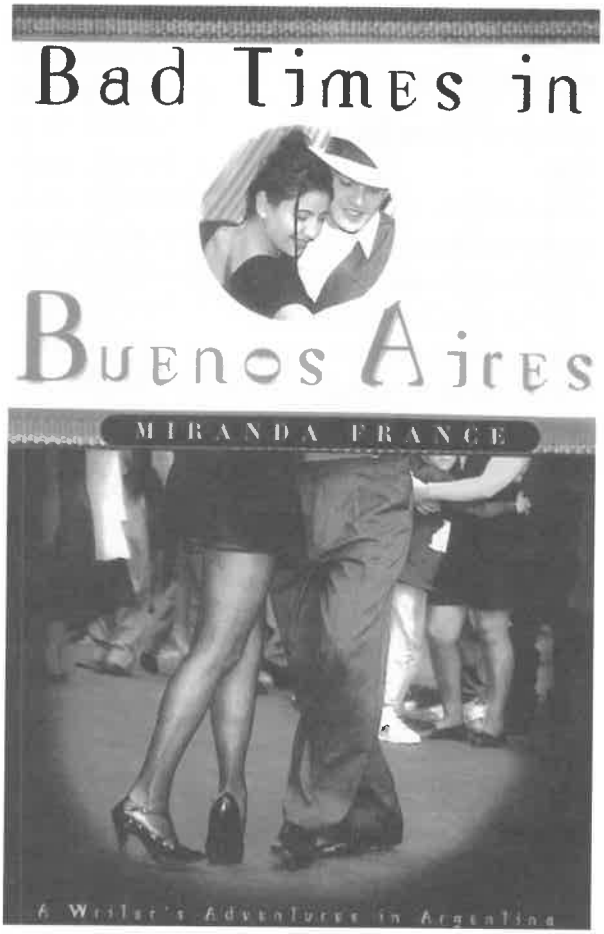
NY: Modern Library, 1999. 304 pages, paper, $12.95

Available through SAEC, $12.95 [members $11.95]
Item #249

Bad Times in Buenos Aires

Miranda France

NY: Ecco, 1999. 209 pages, hardcover, $24



Sara Wheeler calls **Travels in a Thin Country**, her account of six months in Chile, "a subjective and impressionistic portrait," but it is a Norman Rockwell portrait compared to Miranda France's **Bad Times in Buenos Aires**, her idiosyncratic memoir of a two-year fling as a foreign correspondent for English newspapers.

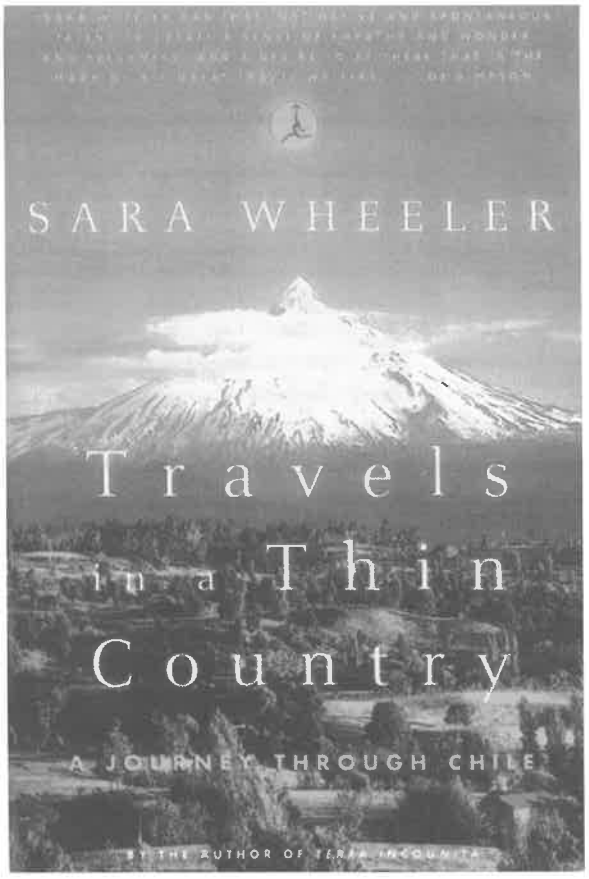
Three months after the idea hit her to write a book about Chile, Wheeler was on a bus en route from Santiago to Arica. She awoke to an illuminated world: "Every molecule of air was pulsating with bright clean desert light. The sky was blanched, and the naked sand was broken only by one long, straight road."

Wheeler had a knack for falling in with fellow road wanderers. In Arica, she met a Dutch woman, who had two young men, a Canadian and an Australian, in tow. "I loitered in Arica for a few days," she writes, "meeting up with and parting from other foreigners like ants in a colony."

"I hadn't planned to hang out with backpackers, and didn't intend to continue," she adds, but her travels were punctuated with episodes of tying up with Brit friends of friends, grizzled hippies, lanky hikers, not to mention the many hospitable Chileans who took her under their wings. Indeed, the spine of the book is Wheeler's skein of small adventures as she buses, trains, and boats her way from Arica to the Antarctic.

Despite its bleak title, **Bad Times in Buenos Aires**, is a hoot. Miranda France is a witty, perceptive, and stylish writer. Her imagery leaps off the page: Young *porteños* are "sleek and glossy as otters"; the city's summer "heat addled and inebriated"; conversations wafting out cafe windows collide "with the screech and skid of traffic." France has an especially keen ear for verbs: Storms hound the pampas; readers trawl the newspapers; musicians electrocute tangos; car horns yowl.

She's also good with characters. Her sketch of Argentine President Carlos Menem, who has three passions in life—his hair, his face, and his starlets—is wicked and dead on. By the time France has finished analyzing the hyper-neurotic *porteños*, she has the entire city strapped to the couch venting its anxieties about the unbearable traffic, the oppressive summer weather, the Evita cult, the surly bureaucrats, the Falklands obsession, the Anglophilia and the Anglophobia, the snarled telephone lines, and the haunting question of what happened to the disappeared. These also become France's anxieties, and so long as she adheres to this theme, her book crackles. She loses her touch, however, when she takes a trip up into Bolivia and Peru, where she becomes a conventional traveloguist, grousing about the discomforts of Andean journeys.



Readers visiting Buenos Aires today will not find quite the vexing metropolis of near collapse that France endured. In the several years since her departure it has bounced back, becoming cleaner, brighter, and livelier, although questions about the disappeared linger.

Pet peeve: The editors of both books obdurately spell *mate* as *maté*. In Spanish, the word for that bitter green infusion carries no accent, but so that readers will not confuse *mate* with the English word "mate," editors insist on adding an accent, but on the wrong letter, the *e* instead of the *a*, causing it to be pronounced ma-TAY.

—Daniel Buck

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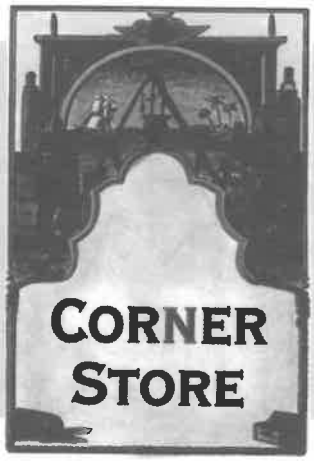

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Travels in a Thin Country: A Journey through Chile

Sara Wheeler

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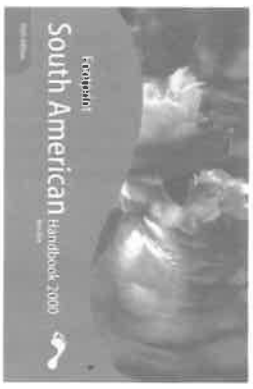

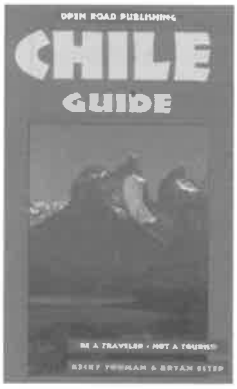

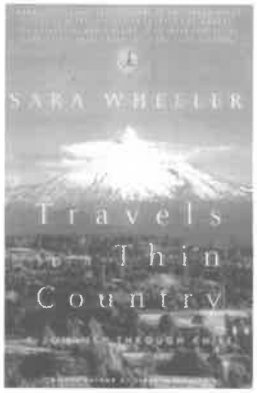

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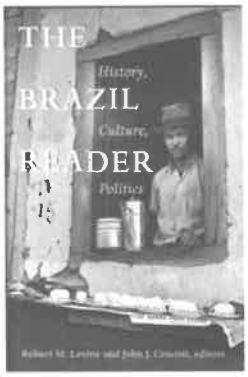

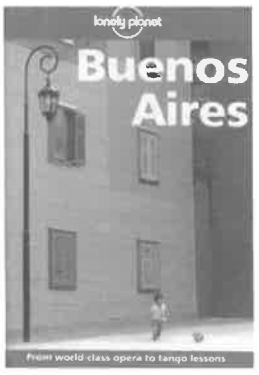

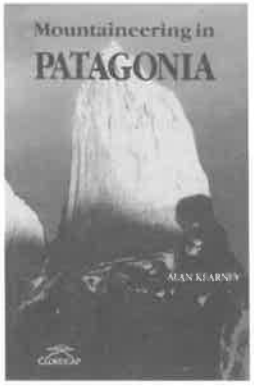

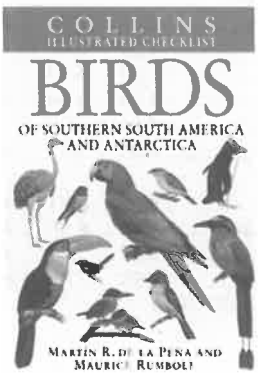

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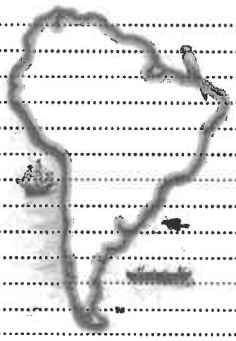

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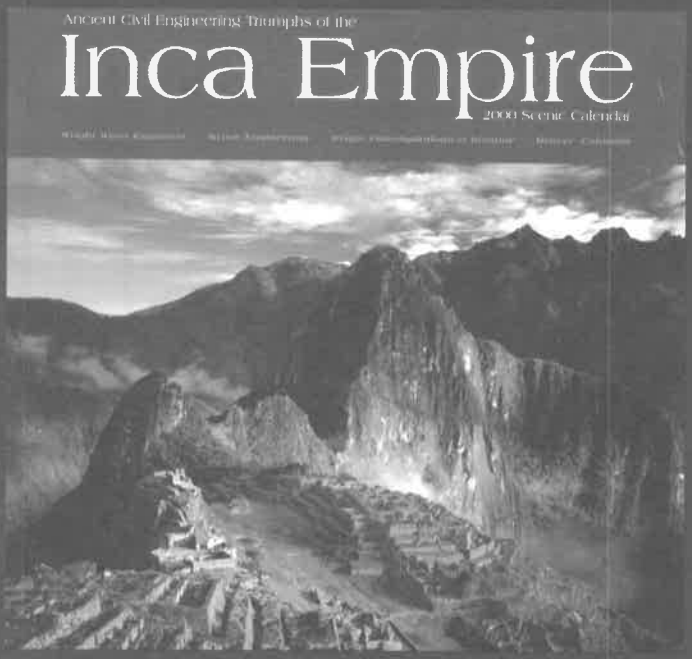

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